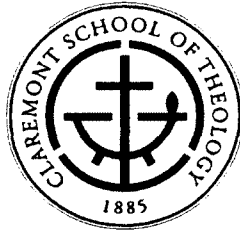


CREATURELY COSMOLOGIES:
WHY METAPHYSICS MATTERS FOR ANIMAL
[AND PLANETARY] LIBERATION—
A PROCESS/JAIN ENCOUNTER

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of
Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Brianne Donaldson
Claremont, California
May 2013



This dissertation completed by

BRIANNE DONALDSON

has been presented to and accepted by the
faculty of Claremont School of Theology in
partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty Committee

Philip Clayton, Chairperson

Roland Faber

Matthew Calarco

Paul Zak

Dean of the Faculty

Philip Clayton

May 2013

ABSTRACT

CREATURELY COSMOLOGIES: WHY METAPHYSICS MATTERS FOR ANIMAL [AND PLANETARY] LIBERATION— A PROCESS/JAIN ENCOUNTER

Brianne Donaldson

The main thesis of this project is that metaphysics—as uniquely exemplified in the creaturely cosmologies of Whitehead’s Process Philosophy and the Indic tradition of Jainism—subvert dominant modes of thinking about and acting toward creaturely life. These “creaturely cosmologies” undermine the anthropocentrism that currently undergirds the majority of disciplines, discourses, and institutions. This explicit and implicit anthropocentrism not only exacts a deadly toll on animal bodies that do not conform to its narrow criteria of value and ethical consideration, but normative anthropocentrism also serves to disenfranchise and de-realize any population or cultural expression that does not conform to its increasingly mono-logical call.

The original contribution of this project is in bringing critical animal theory—a largely secular discipline—into dialog with two metaphysical systems representing very different contexts and cosmological commitments, both of which center on creaturely experiences of perceptive becoming, rather than the human.

This project investigates how Whitehead’s *actual occasion* and the Jain soul, or *jīva*: (1) extends the scope of creative experience to all entities in the universe; (2) describes how every becoming, including our own indeterminate development, takes place between the entanglements of the past and potential futures; and (3) demonstrates how this dual-directional becoming can function methodologically to inspire increasingly inclusive action, co-feeling, and conceptual realities that counteract loss.

Every creaturely becoming is a bridge between what is and what might be, an experimental practice of freedom and direct intra-action amid entanglements toward total liberation, alternative globalizations, and ecological societies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project bears the influence of numerous creatures and provocations. I thank my dissertation committee—Philip Clayton, Roland Faber, Matthew Calarco, Paul Zak, and Christopher Key Chapple—not only for their careful reading of the finished product, but more so for their ongoing influence on my own thought that percolates through and beyond these pages.

I am especially grateful for the friendship of Saadullah Bashir, the mentorship of Dr. Jay Martin, and the companionship of my creaturely family, who each offered a distinctive form of support and presence as I found my footing on this path.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The Panther

In the Jardin des Plantes, Paris

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,
has grown so weary that it cannot hold
anything else. It seems to him there are
a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.

As he paces in cramped circles, over and over,
the movements of his powerful soft strides
is like a ritual dance around a center
in which a mighty will stands paralyzed.

Only at time, the curtain of the pupils
lifts, quietly — . An image enters in,
rushes down through the tensed, arrested muscles,
plunges into the heart and is gone.

— Rainer Maria Rilke

When it comes to liberating animals and ecosystems from the blight of human interference, perhaps nonviolence is not the answer. In a provocative thought experiment titled *The World Without Us*, reporter Alan Weisman speculates that human wars are often an unexpected source of ecological restoration and species re-population. The absence of people, for example, has transformed the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea into a barbed wire preserve with “mature stands of kaimyo oak, Korean willow, and bird cherry growing wherever land mines have kept people out.”¹ After the last exchange of prisoners in 1953, this demarcated strip has been slowly filling with new

¹ Alan Weisman, *The World Without Us* (New York: Picador, 2007), 232.

inhabitants. “One of the world’s most dangerous places became one of its most important—though inadvertent—refuges for wildlife that might otherwise have disappeared,” writes Weisman.² “Asiatic black bears, Eurasian lynx, musk deer, Chinese water deer, yellow-throated marten, an endangered mountain goat known as the goral, and the nearly vanished Amur leopard cling here to what may only be temporary life support.”³ Of course, Weisman’s claim does not hold in all cases. When the U.S. dropped Agent Orange over the forests of Vietnam, for example, everything was laid to waste. But in the borderlands between North and South Korea where rice paddies are reverting to wetlands and ring-necked pheasants can be regularly spotted, the DMZ is a surprisingly hospitable buffer zone.

After humans disappear from the earth, possibly by some combination of virus, natural calamity, or nuclear annihilation, Weisman speculates that it will not take long for creeping vines, moisture, and critters to infiltrate the fundament of human structures. Water will freeze and burst the pipes, saplings will explode through asphalt, mice and woodpeckers will burrow through the drywall. Between lightning strikes that fell skyscrapers to arboreal reclamations of polluted farmland, these acts of “entropic vandalism” will hearken in a new generation of biodiversity currently stymied by our plastics, heavy metals, and chemical toxins. “. . . [T]he time it would take nature to rid itself of what urbanity has wrought,” Weisman quietly asserts, “may be less than we

² Weisman, *The World*, 234.

³ Weisman, *The World*, 234.

might suspect.”⁴ From the Panama Canal to the Great Wall of China, nature will quickly begin to heal the wounds homo sapiens have inflicted on the planet.⁵

1. Life Between Idealism and Realism

Weisman’s imagined future illuminates one side of two conflicting philosophical perspectives regarding the so-called “nonhuman” world, namely realism and idealism. Philosophical realists, like Weisman, posit a world independent of human thought, observation, and action. Idealists, on the other hand, claim that the universe is, to put it simply, dependent on the conscious mind of humans for its form and value. Both of these are metaphysical views—or explanatory frameworks—that describe the nature of reality. Between these camps of idealism and realism, nonhuman life has been trapped since the earliest recorded philosophies.

There is, however, nothing self-evident about the two positions. The idealism of ancient India for example, is not the same as Plato’s ideal forms. And in the post-Enlightenment west, yesterday’s realism is today’s idealism. The challenge for us is to see what is at stake in the distinction as we imagine our kinship with planetary life and potential futures.

1.1. Idealism

Philosophical idealism has many conceptual, historical, and geographic layers, a complexity I can only hint at here as a preface for the two creaturely cosmologies I explore in this project—one deriving from ancient India and one from the margins of the (post)modern west. For the sake of this project, I want to explore two primary themes

⁴ Weisman, *The World*, 24.

⁵ Weisman, *The World*, 222.

with which the Ideal has been synonymous: Ideal as transcendent immateriality and Ideal as transcendent mentality.⁶

As immateriality, idealism emphasizes a “better” or transcendent state over and above the changing morass of the lesser real. Numerous ancient Indian philosophies, for example, described the power of an ideal “higher self” that is obscured when one over-identifies with the ego, elements, senses, mind, and emotions that comprise the “lower self.”⁷ The dualism of Seer and the Seen is a core aspect of most Indian philosophical traditions that held the two as intractably connected perspectives rather than antagonistic opposites.

In the west, medieval idealism—in its dominant forms—rendered the split as an unbridgeable separation between material beings and religious belief in a perfect, other-worldly, and supernatural deity, or Ultimate Being, the core of monotheism. No one could reach the magisterial heights of the omniscient, omnipotent, ever-present Divine. However, the essential spirit of the human was the closest manifestation, the second in line of the classical Great Chain of Being as nearest to divinity, overshadowing everything else in the lower links. In the case of Plato’s ideal forms, God was the ideal over humans, and these (human) ideals served as transcendent laws under which all

⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari also refer to these two aspects of idealism as “objective idealism and subjective idealism” when they write “The Universals of contemplation, and then of reflection, are like two illusions through which philosophy has already passed in its dream of dominating the other disciplines (objective idealism and subjective idealism). Moreover, it does no credit to philosophy for it to present itself as a new Athens by falling back on Universals of communication that would provide rules for an imaginary mastery of the markets and media (intersubjective idealism).” *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 7.

⁷ Christopher Key Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous: Pantañjali’s Spiritual Path to Freedom* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008), 3.

material life was found wanting. The ideal apple trumped the real apple. Unfortunately, the impact of idealism was not confined only to our choice of fruit.

Geo-political, racial, and economic powers harnessed the metaphysical category of idealism—and its theological implications of divine, immaterial favor—in service of their own agendas. The history of physical colonization played out around the globe as the transcendent west exacted its “Manifest Destiny” on real populations and life ways subjugated as primitive, black, beastly, feminine, less than human, uncivil, etc., a history whose wounds are still felt in the present.

As mentality, idealism in the west has taken a peculiar post-Enlightenment turn. The integrated metaphysics of the medieval period that bound divinity, science, and philosophy together fractured into distinct disciplines, each with their own idealism. The ideal of God remained in the camp of western theology, undergoing its own conceptual shifts. But in the other two arenas, the ideal of the Mind gradually supplanted divinity. Humanist empiricism reigned supreme in science and reason became the ideal of philosophy, relegating theology and religion to the position of its superstitious (and feminized) “handmaid.” Buoyed by Darwin’s evolutionary theory that placed humans as the evolutionary model of “fitness,” by Kant’s argument that the real world was mediated by human categories of thought, by British empiricism that gave primacy to human senses, and by the phenomenological tradition of Heidegger who denied objects any proper being until *Dasein*—phenomenological experience unique to humans—imbues them with value, a new generation of humanist hierarchy and domination entered the stage. God was largely replaced with secular humanism as a new Idealism. And where

God persisted, humans were “his” rational regents and stewards. The tradition of transcendent colonization remained unbroken, if redirected.

In the last fifty years, feminists, ecofeminists, postcolonial theorists, and environmental philosophers have sniffed out every trace of transcendence—showing how a divine and immaterial ideal threatens genuine care and concern for the creaturely and material world-as-real. Burdened by notions of progress and the “privilege of heights,” transcendence suggests, according to Mayra Rivera, a directional perfectability that uses spatial metaphors resulting in hierarchy.⁸ From this “above” and “below” spatialization, writes the late Marti Kheel, “a series of dualisms emerge: culture/nature, male/female, good/evil, domestic/wild, conscious/unconscious, subject/object, human/animal,” in which the latter term is always a lesser manifestation of the former.⁹

The oppositional binaries are perceived as naturalized categories in which the real is “naturally” subjugated to the ideal. Not only is power inscribed in these pairings, but the terms of the binaries are also reified and reinforced with every new articulation—the constant creation of the transcendent normative and the dysfunctional non-normative. In the logic of binaries—the transcendent ideal One over the real multiplicity—the majority of existence including women, children, animals, the earth, other races, or what Gayatri Spivak names the *subaltern* are judged inferior to what Judith Butler calls the “inaccessible Symbolic.”¹⁰ In its subjugation to the transcendent ideal, the subaltern is bound in a voiceless slave state, socially, politically, and geographically outside of the

⁸ Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 8-9.

⁹ Marti Kheel, *Nature Ethics: An Ecofeminist Perspective* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 3.

¹⁰ Kheel, *Nature Ethics*, 3.

hegemonic power structure in an inescapable subjection to an other-worldly ideal.

But the rescue of the secular Real from the jaws of the supernatural Ideal, has not freed us from the destructive hierarchies of idealism. On the contrary, the emphasis on rational, secular, empirical humanism has not even translated to *better* treatment of nonhuman creatures and ecological systems, hence Weisman's worst case scenario of a world that we seem to be damaging to the point of threatening our own survival upon it.

Moving to the other side of a binary, it seems, only perpetuates subjugation and de-realization at another register. In rejecting western metaphysical suppositions of divine or immaterial ideals, secular humanism has trapped itself in new binaries based on the western conception of Mind: rational/mystic, philosophical/religious, reason/intuition, west/east, empirical/metaphysical, secular/sacred, and human/nonhuman. In these post-Enlightenment, proof-centric binaries, reality is increasingly reduced to data points that can be reproduced in a lab, or analytic arguments confined to the realm of logic. Though the emphasis is now on a more egalitarian humanism, detached male rationality still produces what Luce Irigaray calls "a phallogocentric economy" that diminishes any mode of perception not sanctioned by the reasonable, phallic, thinking Ideal.¹¹ The means of the binary may have changed, but the ends remains the same—to bring the lower half of the equation under the paternalistic control of the upper half.

With the humanist Ideal-as-the-only-Real, intellectual discourse leaves little room to speculate about any relationship with the secondary terms of the binary without being dismissed as emotional, irrational, superstitious, religious, feminized, mired in unprovable belief, or overly sentimental, mystic, or spiritual.

¹¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990; repr., New York: Routledge, 2007), 55.

1.2. Realism

The reaction to this new secular humanist idealism has been a small but mighty stand on behalf of a new realism—this time in the form of a reoriented materialism that is not purely deterministic. Weisman, for example, presents a non-theistic realist perspective that describes the nonhuman world as anything but an illusory conglomeration of sense perceptions, or an imperfect half of a binary. In the absence of human maintenance, the infrastructure of our technological ingenuity will become skeletal perches for nesting birds or merely swallowed up by the persistent advance of brambles too long restrained. And it will not be just the creatures who create the world without us. In Weisman's realist account, sand will filter away our heavy metals, microbes will subsume our leftover oil, and mountains will gradually digest the landfills on which they've choked for the last hundred years.

In current debates, a new cadre of so-called "speculative realists" reassert that the nonhuman realm indeed lives and creatively develops independent of human thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions about it. If a tree falls in a speculative realist's forest, and there is no one around to hear it, it is fallen nonetheless. Graham Harman defines realism as "any philosophy in which there are real things and relations between them quite apart from being witnessed by thought."¹² Though this may seem intuitive to some readers, realism remains a small minority position within the western philosophical tradition. Most of contemporary western thought depends on the human mind, consciousness, and a very limited sense perception as the key ingredients in the ontology, or being-ness, of nonhuman life.

¹² Graham Harman, "DeLanda's [*sic*] Ontology: Assemblage and Realism," *Continental Philosophy Review* 41 (2008): 368.

Science, for example, though ostensibly dealing with real things, can only affirm those things that it has accessed with its limited notion of perception. Those things that science *cannot* speak to in a positivist, proof-centric way, are not really real. Thus, it is not only supernatural phenomenon like God that are de-realized, but any occurrence or creature that does not assent to being quantified or reproduced in ideal human terms. For this reason, empiricism in the west should not be confused with realism. Western empiricism is very much an expression of the new idealism, subjugating the world to our sense impressions of it and capturing it in our taxonomies. By idealism's count, Weisman's thought experiment is at best a useless conjecture, at worst a pure fiction since the world would not really exist without our perceptions and categorizations of it.

Speculative realists then—thinkers like Manuel de Landa, Ray Brassier, Quentin Meillassoux, Iain Hamilton Grant, Jane Bennett, and Graham Harman—are doing something remarkable. They are trying to make real again those elements of existence that have been de-realized in western thought through the subjugation to human consciousness, empiricism, and perception. Not only do speculative realists reject idealism, but they go a step further to break with the middle ground of correlationism as well, that holds that humans and the world must be thought together, in correlation.¹³ Harman gives no quarter to this position, cutting it to the quick before it gains any ground, “If *people* always have to be involved in any situation being discussed in your philosophy, then you're an idealist.”¹⁴ Speculative realism, according to Levi Bryant,

¹³ Harman, “DeLanda's [*sic*] Ontology,” 369.

¹⁴ Graham Harman, “Stated Differently,” Object-Oriented Philosophy Blog, entry posted September 15, 2009, <http://doctorzamalek2.wordpress.com/2009/09/15/stated-differently/> (accessed May 11, 2013).

unapologetically “insists on the independence of the world from thought . . .”¹⁵ Human perception is simply not required to validate the reality of the changing world, which can and does, according to realists, exist without us. Realists may attempt to explain human experience and thought, but only as one aspect among others that do not require the human, its interpretation, or frameworks of knowledge.

1.3. Leveling the binary

Before choosing one camp or the other and perpetuating this philosophical antagonism, I suggest that there may be more options, although they will require us not only to look to the history and margins of systematic thought de-realized by the dominant streams of western philosophy, but also to enter into our own speculations regarding the nature of reality. It falls to us to ask whether “nature” or its creatures is best understood as either one or the other—only real as material existence free from any unempirical input, or only ideal, without a shred of independent or creative existence. Instead of opting for realism *or* idealism so that one must always subjugate the other, I propose we look for those explanatory frameworks that level the binary.

Instead of ideal over real or vice versa, what cosmological perspectives place the two in a creative, infusing relationship with one another, altering both in the process? If we think along the visual lines of yin and yang, we can imagine how the ideal and real might be woven into, rather than pitted against, one another as the black and white spheres overlap, emerging in the center of the other color field. Are there any worldviews that describe the universe as this kind of intra-active process in which the real and ideal,

¹⁵ Levi Bryant, “Realism, Desire in Philosophy and Some Questions About Relations,” Larval Subjects Blog, entry posted September 18, 2008, <http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2009/09/18/realism-desire-in-philosophy-and-some-questions-about-relations/> (accessed October 20, 2012).

the transcendent and the empirical, are both immanent aspects within every kind of creaturely experience, internal to the process of change and development itself? These worldviews must offer more than correlationism, where entities and mental perception are held side by side in an atomistic coextension. Rather, the search is for frameworks that do more than let us think *about* separate things simultaneously or alongside one another, say my perceiving mind in the right hand and a fox in the left. We are in need of perspectives that see these oppositions as mutually immanent, somehow enfolded together, reciprocally bound, co-constitutive—*within* every experience, and certainly not only those deemed “human.” The quest is for worldviews that make this unprogrammed immanence the very definition of creaturely experience, whether mine, the fox’s or experience much more generally. The starting point of an adequate metaphysics is not the oppositional binary of subject over object—me or the fox—but the *mode of experience* that is common to us both even in our different expressions of it.

This is the fundamental conceptual shift needed in our time: to turn our backs finally on any oppositional binary that posits fixed things, inert substances, and static *being* toward a fluid and multiple explanation of experiential *becoming*. It is not my mind *or* the fox *or* the river *or* electrons which must be the primary point of exploration, as though each substance fell from the sky as static entities that can now be categorized, compared, and contrasted to one another and every other thing. The fact that each of these entities continuously change, affect and are affected by others, adapt and respond, inspire and cohabitate, that we linger in one another’s memory, shape one another’s formation, are shaped by unseen others, and together co-shape our shared reality from the inside out must be the starting point. We are not in pursuit of a tidy Edenic origin, but

more adequate accounts of *what is* and *what we are* with it.

Persistent identity—the “you,” the “me,” the “fox,” the “electron”—is one expression of our becoming. But we must also account for the flux—the way in which we, and all experience, integrate the real data of our existence and encounters with ideal potentials in ever-changing ways. *How* we integrate these disparate pieces is the common question that unites all *whos* and *whats*. It is the *how* that is the very condition of our shared existence, a fundamental mode of relational experience and singular decisions that must be theorized prior to any of our fixed designations of subject or object.

And yet, a metaphysics of the *who* and *what*—of fixed substance or the perceiving subject and the passively perceived object—continues to be the dominant, if implicit, framework at work in western sciences, philosophies, theologies, humanities, ethics, morality, and public policy. Even our sentence structure is based on keeping fixed identities straight, is it not? I own this land. You eat that chicken. She climbed a tree. We studied them. They attacked us. The man stole the apple. Which man? A black man. A Chinese man. A gay man. A Granny Smith apple. We deal with groups, classifications, things, subjects and objects, those who own and those who are owned, those who speak and those spoken about, adding only the adjectives that help us define one from the other, as if these were the inviolable categories of existence handed down from on high. How strange that in our secularizing society we accept these “truths” as unquestioned articles of faith. Yet, each time one of us assents to these deeply flawed and already-falsified truisms, we perpetuate a dogma that subjugates the very heart of creative life and isolates western thought from other sophisticated world- and life-views that might better enable our survival and co-creative futures with the creaturely world.

The pursuit of conceptual control and a very limited notion of empirical truth has de-realized not only modes of becoming that are not measurable by the five senses, but also epistemic and metaphysical frameworks that do not start with the human as the first and final arbiter of the Real. In the first case, internal relations are simply ignored— since they are much more difficult to identify with our senses or to reproduce in a lab. We can measure our heart rate and track changes in neurotransmitters, but no philosopher or scientist can yet fully explain what fear, love, attachment, aversion, or satisfaction is, and all of us can be grateful that the richness of our experience exceeds its empirical explanation. Data points do not a creature make, although they can add a great deal to our speculative journey. In the second case, the warp and weft of living is left to the unempirical poets and artists, to “primitive” or pre-philosophical religions, and the irrational mystics, who attempt to describe the silent moments of pleasure, service, sorrow, and awe, however felt, that summon the depths of kindred feeling, desolation, or hope.

Amidst this entangled becoming of real and ideal, it is difficult to posit, as Weisman does, a world truly without us or us without the world. Much like the specters of lost loves, extinct creatures, and past moments, the residues of these entangled creaturely and conceptual histories linger, persisting in the memory of events, insisting from within unfolding experiences long after our bodies may be gone.

2. Creaturely Cosmologies of Becoming

This project explores two metaphysical systems that describe *how* life develops between the real and ideal, namely the Process Philosophy systematized by Alfred North Whitehead and the Jain philosophy of ancient India. They are realist insofar as both assert

self-determination in all life. There is nothing purely passive about existence. Entities are not just sense impressions on the mind, but creative becomings. As Levi Bryant asserts, “Whitehead is perhaps the greatest realist . . . philosopher of the last century,”¹⁶ and as Bina Gupta claims, “The philosophical outlook of Jainism is a metaphysical realism and pluralism as it holds that the objects exist independently of our knowledge and perception of them, and that these objects are many.”¹⁷ But both Process and Jainism maintain a degree of idealism as well that is different from the classical sense. The experience of becoming transforms the fixed perfection of idealism into something equally multiple and changing. Idealism in these metaphysical frameworks is one half of a dual integration of real and ideal in each event, a leveled binary now mutually requiring each part like yin and yang enfolded together. Process and Jainism describe the unification of real and ideal, the actual past and the potential future, the empirical and the transcendent, the material and the immaterial, as the fundamental creaturely activity within the universe.

For this reason, I call these two metaphysical systems “creaturely cosmologies” in that do not take the (male, western) human, nor the humanized “animal,” as their starting point, but look to experience in general, where the “creature” is every real event of self-determining, creative experience.

In this view, humans and animals are “real” creatures, as are trees, cells, rivers, and tables, insofar as each is an event or an aggregate of events unifying multiple real happenings and ideal potentials within their ongoing becoming. But there is mode of experience even more fundamental than these recognizable entities. Process describes the

¹⁶ Levi Bryant, “Realism” (blog).

¹⁷ Bina Gupta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy: Perspectives on Reality, Knowledge, and Freedom in Indian Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 67.

“actual occasion” as the final “creature” or “event” of which the universe is made, while Jainism describes the “jīva” as the integrative life event propelling ongoing existence. These creatures do not fit into western political schemes or biological taxonomies, yet speculative metaphors like this point to an active self-determination pervading existence. The actual occasion and jīva denote the wide and innumerable scope of creative processes developing in the universe and how these processes play in, with, and through other processes, infusing and informing their becoming, insisting their way into the creative advance whether we recognize them or not.

This point is essential to animal liberation philosophy in two ways. First, it asserts that creatures are not passive material wound up like so many inert Cartesian clocks, only *appearing* to feel pain and misery as Descartes vivisected them alive. Second, liberation is not aimed only at rescuing passive bodies from cages; it is aimed at releasing dynamic self-determining multiplicities from the inadequate concepts and dominant representations that justify their continued exploitation and confinement. Insofar as it is concerned with creatures and the multiple relations that sustain and constitute creaturely becoming, animal liberation must be about freeing the *entire* matrix of multiplicities from every tyrannical law or worldview that subjugates the creative process to its arbitrary hierarchies and humanist frames of recognition. Animal liberation is about seeking out and creating new concepts adequate to the reality in which all entities—and not merely those deemed “human,” or reduced into the singular category of “animal”—live, move, and have their experiential becomings.

3. Indeterminacy and Flexible Epistemologies

Animal liberationists are not the only ones attempting to free this multiplicity. As theoretical physicist Karen Barad points out in her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, even “classical notions of ‘wave’ . . . and ‘particle’ . . . are but abstractions . . . only idealizations” whose actuality must “derive from specific material arrangements.”¹⁸ Barad points to Danish philosopher and physicist Neils Bohr, along with several other physicists who, since the turn of the 20th century, have weakened the mechanistic foundations of Newtonian physics and undermined the Cartesian epistemology of representationalism, where a fixed concept was seen to “represent” a unified entity.

According to Barad, Bohr’s notion of *complementarity* offered “a quantum alternative to the classical mode of description,”¹⁹ where suddenly “wave” and “particle” could only be understood in terms of their relational behavior in a given context. In certain cases, an electron behaves as a wave; in others, as a particle. Bohr was clear that *what* we might call something depended on *how* it behaved in complementary circumstances.

Bohr proposed an entirely new ontological framework for approaching dynamic life—even particles and waves—that rejected any fixed essence or substance metaphysics. He also proposed a new epistemological framework of relational knowledge that “calls into question the . . . distinction between subject and object and the knower and the

¹⁸ Karen Barad, *Meeting The Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 296.

¹⁹ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 296.

known.”²⁰ Instead of separate kinds of things—like particle and wave—Bohr claimed that the complementarity between them was the defining aspect in each moment.²¹ Electrons sometimes behave as particles and sometimes as waves. A framework of relations, what Barad calls “intra-actions,” is prior to these designations. Bohr made clear that the contradictions of representationalism—wave *or* particle—gave way to complementarity, a “reciprocal definability” like yin and yang, where a multiplicity of states exist that can only be understood in terms of one another.²²

Bohr argued for *complementary indeterminacy* over and against Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle. He was not convinced that particle physics demanded merely a *better* epistemic interpretation. According to Barad, “Bohr insists that what is at issue are the *very possibilities for definition of the concepts and the determinateness of the properties and boundaries of the ‘object’*.”²³ The ontology of life is not *uncertain* as Heisenberg might have us think, as though merely another more adequate structure would make it clearer. Rather, Bohr’s research asserts that ontology *is actually indeterminate* and these unpredictable, complimentary, reciprocal relations are intrinsic to atomic structure. The proof-positivism of science gives way to a creaturely indeterminism. The “truth” that complementarity reveals is an uncontrollable intra-action, a mutual

²⁰ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 138.

²¹ Bohr and his colleagues repeatedly undermined the reigning hypotheses of scientists like Einstein, Rosen, and Podolsky, using empirical studies that, according to quantum physicists George Greenstein and Arthur Zajonc in *The Quantum Challenge*, “change the very way we should think of physical existence at its most fundamental level.” For example, the assumptions of classical physics—that objects have inherently determinate properties or that nothing done at one location can have instantaneous causal effects at another location, have been empirically disproven. Quoted in Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 289.

²² Barad, *Meeting The Universe*, 297.

²³ Barad, *Meeting The Universe*, 302, author’s emphasis.

betweenness, that requires flexibility in the observer. Such an ontological assertion, which contributed to Bohr's winning the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1922, required new ways to think and speak about life.

How do we, after all, categorize life that is indeterminate, fluid, plural, and changing? How do we, for example, know a world that is also knowing or perceiving us? How do we approach a world whose identity roles are in perpetual flux? Traditional perspectives of realism and idealism fall apart as soon as subject and object, knower and known, seer and seen are indeterminate. The moment those terms lose their moorings the game has changed. Each time we liberate *who* or *what* the subject and object may be and look for the *how* of reciprocal definability in each situation, we are straying from traditional modes of knowing, or epistemology, in order to follow what Gilles Deleuze calls the "line of flight," meaning the indeterminate and unpredictable leap toward an open, as yet undecided, future.²⁴

Yet the risk is also the adventure! We trade up for a refurbished realism in which the indeterminate world is not purely independent of us as though it existed in a vacuum, and we also snag an updated idealism in which perception and objectification goes all ways. We can also be objects for the perceiving world. Thus, if we want to imagine the world without us, we must first attempt to understand how the world is ontologically relating with us, which is not always on our terms.

Certainly current concepts are inadequate. Much as the monolithic categories of "woman" or "immigrant" de-realize the creative singularity of each body, Jacques Derrida points out that the singular word "animal" is criminally reductionist, attempting

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 9.

to cover “*all the living things* that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbors, or his brothers.”²⁵ But what else can we do? As empiricist John Locke pointed out, “It is beyond the power of human capacity to frame and retain distinct ideas of all the particular things we meet with.”²⁶ He goes on, “every bird and beast men saw, every tree and plant that affected the senses, could not find a place in the most capacious understanding.”²⁷ So language turns the gourmet meal into a bite-sized convenience snack. And certainly it does save us a great labor, but we are also spared the depth of flavors. Is philosophy now left only with this either/or option? Is life so impossibly complex that we prefer the most palatable version, even if it is bland and uninspiring?

Process and Jain epistemologies do not claim that we must rid ourselves of all abstract concepts or linguistic shortcuts, but nor should we be so easily satiated with them. As Whitehead wrote, “You cannot think without abstractions; accordingly it is of the utmost importance to be vigilant in critically revising your *modes* of abstraction.”²⁸ Critical revision does not valorize the deceptive simplicity of concepts, nor is it satisfied merely with placing terms under Derrida’s “erasure,” indicating that all of our words are but poor approximations of the Other, and thus ultimately unhelpful. Rather, we must find concepts and worldviews that affirm indeterminacy, reciprocity, dynamic multiplicity, even as these concepts and worldviews themselves will be changed,

²⁵ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 34.

²⁶ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Gifford Lectures, 1927-28, corr. ed., ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 52.

²⁷ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 52.

²⁸ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science in the Modern World* (1925; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1967), 59.

stretched, and even discarded. No representation is sacrosanct. A realist/idealist ontology of becoming cannot be content with defining *who* or *what* as the nouns of its study, but rather must ask *how* an entity is becoming in each moment and, in fact, how that becoming actually *creates* or territorializes the moment and the terms by which we might attempt to explain it. The terms are secondary. It is the multiplicity of feeling and expression that bring a moment to shape and life. In other words, it may be easier to swing by the drive through each night for dinner, but there is a pliability and confidence that comes from learning to wield a knife well and combining tastes and textures in service of one's own nourishment. Likewise, it may be easier to rely on pre-given vocabulary than to cultivate a growing sensitivity toward creative life that is unbridled from the restraints of language. The effort is, figuratively and literally, a significant matter of taste.

One could argue that numerous institutions already attend to the indeterminacy of changing creaturely bodies on our behalf, so why bother? Do not zoos and conservation programs detail the daily doings of their charges, offering voyeuristic reports on every reproductive rendezvous and breakfast habit? Do not factory farms assess the milk or egg production of their populations, the poundage of flesh cut clean from the spectral form? Do not laboratories measure and re-measure the physiological reactions to drug testing and invasive procedures? As Michel Foucault has aptly pointed out, these institutionalized discourses, in their pseudo attempts to catalog every shifting data point, rely upon and reproduce the normative version of the objectified bodies they hold captive

in the subjective regimes of knowledge.²⁹ Creaturely cosmologies like Process and Jainism rework the realist/idealist limitations of the subject and object, and reject the naturalization of bodies in captivity, affirming their subversive creativity. But they also reject the captivity of our own thought to someone else's account. "In the Garden of Eden," writes Whitehead playfully, "Adam saw the animals before he named them: in the traditional system, children named the animals before they saw them."³⁰ An epistemology that attempts to ask *how* a process happens is asking an open-ended question that liberates both the subject and object, the knower and the known, to an ontology of becoming and a validation of perceptive experience that is in constant, self-determining, reciprocally-defining, creative flux.

4. Liberation as Dysfunctional Metaphysics

A creaturely cosmology faithful to and curious about the dynamic world it affirms, according to Deleuze, "stands in opposition to the law or the polis."³¹ Process and Jain metaphysics of becoming indeed aim to liberate the multiplicity of life from reductive concepts. But they also aim to free concepts from the tyranny of the past. As Deleuze writes, "philosophers must distrust most those concepts they did not create themselves."³² Whitehead too, emphasized the importance of "first-hand expression" rather than responsive expression that, per Whitehead, "expresses intuition elicited by the expressions of others."³³ Creaturely cosmologies affirm a widened field of valid

²⁹ Michel Foucault, *A History of Sexuality, Volume I* (1978; repr., New York: Random House, 1990), Parts I and V.

³⁰ Whitehead, *Science in the Modern World*, 198.

³¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 380.

³² Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 6.

³³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making: Lowell Lectures, 1926* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 133.

perceptions rather than a narrowing of it, and think cosmic life in terms of liberating first-hand flows rather than constraining pre-existent hierarchies.

Additionally, creaturely cosmologies are a friend to chaos as a generative process. They embrace what process philosopher Roland Faber calls an “anarchic openness” that subverts any structured totality.³⁴ The Great Chain of Being gives way to vibrant matrices, living maps drawn by creaturely cartographers that enact the narrative of existence in their own creative decisions and responses. Creaturely cosmologies resist even the structuralism of organic models framed on concepts of form and function, which is not to say that they are fully without structure.³⁵ It is, however, the kind of structure that makes all the difference. Animal liberation can look to these creaturely cosmologies as a *metaphysics of dysfunction* to challenge once and for all the repressive structures that order existence at the expense of the indeterminate, yet still world-determining, subaltern.³⁶

In a dysfunctional metaphysics of becoming, the disjointed processes of life itself become the only unification of real and ideal, a unity that paradoxically does not look at all unified.³⁷ This new unification is the ground of all complexity, evolution, and creativity. “Must we,” asks theologian Catherine Keller, “continue to mistake “ground”

³⁴ Roland Faber, “‘O Bitches of Impossibility!’ Programmatic Dysfunction in the Chaosmos of Deleuze and Whitehead,” in *Deleuze, Whitehead, Bergson: Rhizomatic Connections*, ed. Keith Robinson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 206.

³⁵ One example of an organic model is Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela’s biological insight of “autopoiesis” described in *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*, trans. Robert Paolucci (1992; repr., Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998).

³⁶ Faber, “O Bitches of Impossibility!,” 203.

³⁷ Roland Faber, *God as Poet of the World: Exploring Process Theologies*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 114.

for fixity, the self-present, the changeless-for the Same?”³⁸ Process and Jain metaphysics answer an unequivocal “No.” The meta-ground of a creaturely cosmology takes its cues from creatures — the manifold subaltern/s currently outside our frameworks of recognition — the heterogeneous assemblages, self-creative occasions, activities, spontaneous co-mappings, inventions, provocations, recombinations, and disruptive linkages. Nouns give way to verbs. Unity is not about things, but events insisting from within the matrix of becoming and not imposed from without.³⁹ Structure is *immanent* — within the processes of unification — and not a transcendent, pre-existing frame.

4.1. Why do metaphysics matter?

The aim in these pages is not to assert metaphysics as a one-size-fits-all solution to global problems or endemic violence toward animals or other subaltern populations. Rather, it is the need to investigate cosmologies that have lent a metaphorically rigorous framework to the very fragile sensitivity in the west of the nonhuman world being alive, tingling with interiority and creative capacity. There is no battle cry of “Metaphysics or Die!” within these pages. Instead, the aim is to dispense with any *allergy* to metaphysics that exists within animal liberation philosophy (or other philosophies) and critical animal theory as a result of a well-founded mistrust of universals, patriarchy, rationalism, idealism, sensationalism, logocentrism, consciousness, disembodied abstraction, and transcendence, all of which enable the diminishment of nature in general, and animals in particular. The secular, humanist, and poststructural disciplines that inform contemporary critical animal theory have not only been incommensurate with metaphysics, but also

³⁸Catherine Keller, “Introduction,” in *Process and Difference: Between Cosmological and Poststructural Postmodernisms*, ed. Catherine Keller and Anne Daniell (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), 13.

³⁹Faber, *God as Poet*, 114.

hostile to any cosmology that would offer a universal description of bodies in the world. Is there really any meta-system that can truly avoid colonizing life? This project answers in the affirmative.

In a dynamic world powered by indeterminate and immanent relations, confining structuralisms or inaccurate cosmological frameworks threaten us all. The logic of the One displaces every particular. As ecofeminist author Jim Cheney suggests, the drive toward a coherent worldview in which every part conforms to an Absolute, squelches difference and herds us toward a monolithic sameness. “Rather than an ethical voice emergent from existential encounter, from genuine relationship,” he writes, “we get an ethical voice grounded in the authoritarian, impersonal truth of metaphysics . . .”⁴⁰ The traditional logic of a metaphysical One lands on every body that does not conform to its rational, patriarchal law, resulting in overlapping oppressions by which women, the poor, minorities, animals, and ecologies are excluded from (ethical) considerability in the socio/geo/political sphere. Thus the metaphysics of becoming that I put forth here are subversive of a static One, descriptive of a dysfunctional multiplicity that disrupts every normative hierarchy.

In the monologic of globalization, we see a single (western, male, humanist, rational, philosophical) Ideal mode of existence spreading across the planet and wiping out cultural distinctions, personal expression, and various ancient life ways. Having granted itself the full power of Subjectivity, it has judged the objects of the world as substandard, seeking to replace it with its own aim. Like Huxley’s *Brave New World*, our entire planet is being forced towards a single language and a single model of commerce,

⁴⁰ Kheel, *Nature Ethics*, 184.

production, and governmental rule with Huxley's new world slogan "Community, Identity, Stability," flying overhead.⁴¹ Corporate monopolies on technology, trade, agriculture, means of production, and militarism devastate alternative means of communal living, social order, and cohabitation with sustaining environmental systems. The single focus on a limited notion of human well-being does not just affect nonhumans or the subaltern, though it certainly does that in spades. When the world and its creative inhabitants are seen as passive matter to be molded under a single banner of stable profit margins, resource extraction, and production value, relational multiplicity is captured and harnessed in service of the One. The logic of the One—be it in monopolies, monocropping, or monotheisms—too often subjects all nonconforming differences to its singular Ideal, regimes of knowledge, and technologies.

In such a time, our world does not need fewer voices, but more. We do not need to reduce the complexities of the world, but to encourage their free proliferation. All global citizens today live amidst ongoing military occupations and campaigns, threats of war, climate change, the loss of biodiversity, water shortages, sanctioned violence against women and minorities, and the brutal holocaust against animal bodies and the habitats that sustain them, and on which we depend. The logic of the One must be replaced with more adequate cosmologies that take the unprogrammatic creative advance of life seriously, recognizing finally that the world lives with (or without) us in much more complex relations than our subjective philosophies allow. Only defiant, risk-taking collaborations and experiments that do not heed the politically correct and ontologically

⁴¹ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932; repr., New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 4.

deficient lines of gender, species, nationalism, mind/body, man/nature, and subject/object will suffice.

Our planet is groaning under the weight of implicit metaphysical assumptions that have us all shackled. A tectonic shift is needed, like the multiple heat-induced earthquakes that have rumbled this table as I have typed these pages. A creaturely cosmology attunes us to the systemic ways in which planetary possibilities are being polluted, intensity and creativity is being clear-cut, and our creaturely neighbors are being imminent-domained right out of existence in service of a monophonic call.

5. Forging Experimental Alliances

Animal liberation, with its keen sensitivity to the capture of relationality, must join forces with others who endeavor toward a more adequate understanding of life. Judith Butler, for example, proposes “provisional unities,”⁴² in place of “movements,” experimental assemblages that explore alternative means of thinking and speaking. Such provisional coalitions must ground themselves in what Deleuze calls a “univocity”⁴³ of process, meaning a fundamental and singular affirmation of life as multiple, creative transmissions of experience, powered by its own immanent structure of indeterminate relationality. Univocity is, paradoxically, multiplicity. In univocity, Foucault’s “biopower,” is not something that subjugates bodies from the outside, but transforms to an immanent insistence *within* each creaturely entity, within each event.⁴⁴ A univocal affirmation starts in the ontological gaps, “between things, interbeing, intermezzo,”⁴⁵

⁴² Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 21.

⁴³ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (1968; repr., New York: Columbia University Press), 36.

⁴⁴ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 140.

⁴⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 25.

where the subject and object do not hold sway. Folds open unto folds, constant re/gatherings of the fabric of existence. As Deleuze and Félix Guattari assert, “The only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between . . .”⁴⁶ What is at stake in jumping in the relational middle is not only the liberation of animals, but of creative experience in general, and “a free and wild creation of concepts” capable of crafting different provisional futures in which diverse voices and bodies are affirmed as celebrated fellows and co-creators at our planetary table.⁴⁷

In this effort, individual change is crucial, but not enough. As critical animal theorist Steve Best writes in his “Manifesto for Radical Abolitionism: Total Liberation By Any Means Necessary,” personal and political actions like eating a vegan diet are essential, but they are “not a sufficient condition of the large-scale social transformations needed for creating viable democratic and ecological cultures.”⁴⁸ From this perspective, animal liberationists must seek, not just to free physically and conceptually caged bodies, but to join with others—even provisionally—re/constructing alternative ways of living and thinking with our fellow citizens, and exposing them to the “structural forces in their lives and the ways in which sedimented economic and political institutions pose profound obstacles to teaching, learning, and progressive ethical and social change.”⁴⁹ The philosophy of direct action on behalf of caged bodies is, at its heart, not just a political transformation, but a cosmological one that demands a more adequate account of creative

⁴⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 277.

⁴⁷ Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

⁴⁸ Steve Best, “Manifesto for Radical Abolitionism: By Any Means Necessary,” Animal Liberation Front, entry posted November 13, 2009, <http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/Manifesto-TotalLib.htm> (accessed August 2, 2012).

⁴⁹ Best, “Manifesto for Radical Abolitionism” (blog).

life. “Pacifist lifestyle veganism,” will not be enough, according to Best, “to forestall biological meltdown and ecological catastrophe.”⁵⁰

Best articulates a radical reformation of animal liberation philosophy on a cosmopolitical scale that supports direct action, that condemns capitalism as “inherently irrational, exploitative and destructive . . .” that sees “human animal, nonhuman animal, and earth liberation as inseparable projects,” and that “promotes an anti-capitalist alliance politics with other rights, justice, and liberation movements.”⁵¹ I am unwilling to say at present that all free market economics are made equal.⁵² But I concur that alternatives to the dominant mode of present capitalist schemes are desperately needed. Such alternatives may run so counter to the grain of the current status quo that even to theorize them may look like pure dysfunction, or experimental chaos. Yet, perhaps we might rest on Akira Kurosawa’s adage that in a mad world, only the mad are sane. We do not need merely a *rejection* of classical western metaphysics and the binary, hegemonic logic of the One. We are in need of fundamental inversions, un/re-foldings, and adventurous lines of flight into the realms of ontology, epistemology, action, and discourse. The practical results of such reversals are unknown, making the effort even more risky. But we cannot continue to patch a vehicle whose metaphysical framework is rusted into peanut brittle,

⁵⁰ Best, “Manifesto for Radical Abolitionism” (blog).

⁵¹ Best, “Manifesto for Radical Abolitionism” (blog).

⁵² Though it is beyond the scope of this project, I am compelled by many aspects of the Austrian school of economics that stress a proliferation of economic models, the interdependence of economic, social, and institutional phenomena, and voluntary exchange. See, for example, F. A. Hayek’s *The Constitution of Liberty* or his remarkable Nobel Prize lecture “The Pretense of Knowledge,” and Joseph Schumpeter’s concept of “creative destruction” by which new modes of exchange develop to replace existing forms, described in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. Pressing these models beyond the humanist register to theorize creaturely modes of exchange or freedom is the challenge (see footnote on p. 70).

constructed of woefully deficient understandings of how life actually develops through intra-active processes of becoming, with and without us. The time is near, if it hasn't already passed us by, when we must leave the car and walk away, trusting our feet to navigate the unstable terrain. As Rilke writes,

Sometimes a man stands up during supper
and walks outdoors, and keeps on walking,
because of a church that stands somewhere in the East.

And his children say blessings on him as if he were dead.

And another man, who remains inside his own house,
stays there, inside the dishes and in the glasses,
so that his children have to go far out into the world
toward that same church, which he forgot.⁵³

Perhaps it is an issue of memory, of the forgotten "religious" urge to tie ourselves back (from Cicero's pre-Christian interpretation of *religio* as *relegere*, meaning "to re-trace or re-read" the plural bonds of one's ancestors⁵⁴), not to dogmatic formulations, but into the plural and creative advance of planetary life. Perhaps Rilke's Church is one that reveals a new understanding of religion beyond the narrowly "religious" definition of the west toward a theoretical and embodied exploration into the manifold ligaments of existence of which we, and each creaturely event, are univocally entangled and continually complicit within its rhizomatic betweenness. Philosophy must get up from the

⁵³ Rainer Maria Rilke, "Sometimes a Man Stands Up During Supper," *Selected Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke*, trans. Robert Bly (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 49.

⁵⁴ Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and 'The Mystic East'* (1999; repr., New York: Routledge, 2002), 35-7. King describes *relegere* as Cicero's pre-Christian interpretation that equated *religio* with *traditio*, denoting continuity with ancestors in an inherently pluralistic context. King juxtaposes this with Lactantius' *religare*, a Christian counter to Cicero's interpretation that equated *religio* with "the bond of piety," the Covenant between the one true God and man," that captured authority for Christians in Roman society through monotheistic exclusivism and the paganization of nonconformists.

table out of pure loyalty to the experiencing world that insists on being accounted for on its own terms. Do we just wait for the next course, or do we push back our chair from a finally unpalatable meal? Whatever possible futures lie ahead, we each decide if we will wait passively for their arrival or if we will contribute our own creativity to their coming. Will we risk the de/re/territorializations of our own ideas, identities, and unquestioned truths to avoid the brave new world in which the unprogrammed awe of creative potential is genetically modified, decanted, and distributed; while pleasure is prescribed and swallowed whole without thought to its taste? Will we, too, convince ourselves to be content with the myths of scarcity that keep us locked behind the gated communities of our humanist, subjectivist, nationalist, or speciesist fortresses? Will we find ourselves, like T. S. Eliot's protagonist J. Alfred Prufrock, fearfully clinging to the security of spent notions before admitting, "I have measured out my life in coffee spoons"?⁵⁵ Or do we turn toward cosmologies that break that secure structure apart leaving us confronted with a wildly abundant multiplicity of life in its becomings?

In this increasingly monological world, we find ourselves in tighter and tighter quarters, like Rilke's pacing panther circling "around a center/ in which a mighty will stands paralyzed."⁵⁶ With only a memory of what our muscles might be capable of, we grow increasingly fearful of the self-determination and relationality that is our creaturely gift and burden.

Creaturely cosmologies turn us toward ourselves as much as toward others and invite us to face the fears that come with the prospect of indeterminacy and self-

⁵⁵ T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2011), 19.

⁵⁶ Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Panther," *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 24-5.

determination rather than the security of predetermined structures. If life is not beholden to an outside framework, but is rather a multiplicity of processes generative of their own structures through immanent relations, our own self-determination—as well as that of all creaturely life—suddenly finds itself fearfully free and loose, as animal theorist Matthew Calarco writes “without the guardrails . . .” of previous identity structures such as the human-animal distinction, among others.⁵⁷ As Walter Kaufmann, the great translator of Nietzsche, wrote, the word “decide” comes from the Latin *decido* which means to choose as well as to “fall off,” as in the case of deciduous plants whose leaves drop in winter. *Decidophobia*, a word Kaufmann coined in his incisive and timeless text *Without Guilt and Justice*, “has something in common with acrophobia, the fear of precipitous heights . . . Decidophobia is also the fear of falling . . . of suddenly being without support.”⁵⁸

Our own immanent power—and that of the multiplicity of life that reciprocally activates us—cannot merely seek new guardrails, new cages, new resolutions that protect us against the fear of falling. By liberating ourselves from hierarchical structures, we are already closer to the shifting ground of a new metaphysics where we navigate between folds and processes, rather than surveying the world from a narrow pre-determined height.

6. Methodology

Process Philosophy and Jainism offer metaphysical frameworks that drop us right in the middle of creaturely becomings in an attempt to hold two directions together at once. My methodology proceeds in overlapping double movements. As described in this

⁵⁷ Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 149.

⁵⁸ Walter Kaufmann, *Without Guilt and Justice: From Decidophobia to Autonomy* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1973), 3.

first chapter, becoming is an alternative to realist and idealist philosophies. Free of this binary structure, metaphysics can explore the indeterminacy and creative agency of life. This dynamism invites new ways of speaking and thinking about life and necessitates unexpected partnerships and activist alliances.

Chapter Two places us in the field of Critical Animal Studies, surveying the dominant approaches of Identity (put forward most notably by Peter Singer and Tom Regan) and Difference (following the poststructural influence of Derrida) that characterize most animal studies theory over the last forty years. Beyond these two approaches is a third option of Indistinction that points to a gap in the field of animal thought that this project attempts to address.

Chapter Three and Four offer another two-fold move, first to the west of Process Philosophy, followed by the east of Jainism. I contextualize the development of Whitehead's speculative system and describe the subversive characteristics of *panexperientialism* as depicted in the actual occasion. Likewise, I provide a general overview of the history, cosmology, and philosophical-ethical commitments of the Jain community, paying special attention to the challenge that the Jain soul, or *jīva*—along with the theory of karma and plural epistemologies—poses to western notions of empiricism, value, identity, and ethics.

Chapter Five presents a comparative look at the dual-directional unification that takes place in all creaturely life, as demonstrated in the architecture of the actual occasion and *jīva*. These strange creatures exemplify a kind of direct intra-action amid entanglements that is instructive for new modes of thinking, speaking, and acting. I look at the Jain commitment to nonviolence, or *ahimsa*, as interpreted differently by animal

theorists Steve Best and Gary Francione, and offer a reading of ahimsa as an experimental intra-action amid entanglements. Similarly, Whitehead describes the intra-action of the actual occasion as a conceptual bridge that can shape alternative futures, a hypothesis I test with a critical reading of Donna Haraway's controversial text *When Species Meet*.

Chapter Six examines the tangible consequences of a metaphysics of becoming, showing both the real cost of a processive universe as well as the ideal potentials offered by Process and Jainism for overcoming those losses in a unison of immediacy. Whitehead's God-as-event and Jainism's liberated soul, or *siddha*, function as images of thought and possibility that show how the past lives in the present, provoking more inclusive and perceptive futures with less loss.

The overarching double movement is that of a bridge between *what is* and *what might be*. I attempt to connect numerous oppositional binaries with multiple layers, by fractal paths, rhizomatic threads, and circuitous patterns and folds. The bridge is not mono-directional as though crossing from mainland to an island. It promises no fixed destination, nor even safe passage, and yet its aim is to welcome what is currently omitted from our thoughts, perceptions, and social, empirical, cultural, and personal narratives. The bridge is not something that creatures can cross, but is rather the very juncture of creative and continuous becoming that shapes the world to come.

Chapter Two

From Frameworks of Recognition to Frameworks of Relevance

What is a merciful heart? It is a heart on fire for the whole of creation, for humanity, for the animals, for demons, and for all that exists. By the recollection of them the eyes of a merciful person pour forth tears in abundance. By the strong and vehement mercy that grips such a person's heart, and by such great compassion, the heart is humbled and one cannot bear to hear or to see any injury or slight sorrow in any in creation.

— St. Isaac the Syrian, *Homily 81*

On the Animal Liberation Front website, there is a page titled “Religion for Animal Activists.” A version of St. Isaac’s above homily tops the page. For some, these poetic words might seem strangely placed next to an image of a balaclava-clad activist holding a just-released rabbit and another posed with a trio of liberated hounds. Animal Liberation Front, or ALF, is an international underground organization of anonymous activists and their supporters who engage in direct action tactics on behalf of animals. Direct action occurs when an individual or group expose an existing social problem, propose an alternative, and/or demonstrate a potential solution. Direct action includes a variety of tactics such as targeting groups or property related to some behavior that direct action participants find unacceptable. There is no centralized leadership in the ALF and small groups or individuals usually carry out direct actions in order to free animals from laboratories, fur farms, or factory farms. Some activists also take undercover videos in order to inform the public of the abuse animals face behind closed doors. While ALF is clear that they do not endorse violence toward humans, their credo does not rule out “causing financial loss to animal exploiters, usually through the damage and destruction

of property."¹ In 2005, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security named ALF a domestic terrorism organization and in the U.K. ALF is considered an extremist group.

However, St. Isaac's words do not ring so much with extremism as with longing. ALF offers a mythical ideal. One page of the website depicts an activist in silhouette, fence cutters in hand, alongside a rabbit and deer, standing atop a picturesque hill as the sun sets. These images take ideology and action toward a religious vision of a peaceable kingdom or an upside down world where lion, lambs, and humans coexist. Amid the videos of lab liberations and spectral eyes staring back behind bars, the ALF's aim "to end the 'property' status of nonhuman animals" takes many forms, including the desire to "help the world's masses emotionally connect . . ." to the suffering of animals and the destruction of creaturely relations.² Behind those masks, it seems there is not a terrorist, but a heart on fire for every creature. Are there mystical sensibilities driving the direct action movement? Is there a sense of cosmological kinship thriving underground?

In a letter from prison, one of the SHAC 7 activists, Andy Stepanian, confirms that this might be the case. The closing paragraph reads:

As I mail this letter out I include a simple request. Tonight step out into the open air of fall and close your eyes. Try to isolate the noise of every passing car, and human made noise. Listen for the world as it, too, lives, breathe in the open air and try to see yourself as an equal part of it. No wall or cage can contain you, because you're always free. As we doubt ourselves we lock up our hearts, let that doubt go and never look back. See yourself in rhythm with history and then change it. We will do this together, we will win, we are winning and this is just

¹ Animal Liberation Front, "The ALF Credo and Guidelines," http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/alf_credo.htm (accessed September 10, 2012).

² Animal Liberation Front, "Mission Statement," http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/mission_statement.htm (accessed September 15, 2012).

the beginning. Our paths may be staged with razor wire, but like those birds we will dance playfully between its dangers. We will always move forward.³

The SHAC 7 was a group of six animal activists plus a corporation called Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS), Europe's largest contract animal-testing lab with facilities in New Jersey and two in England. SHAC, or "Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty," is a global activist network formed in 1999 to bring attention to Huntingdon, as well as those companies who contract with the lab, to test products like household cleaners, drugs, cigarettes, pesticides, and food additives on around 75,000 animals every year, from rats to baboons.⁴ Starting in the 1980's, undercover investigators videotaped numerous acts of cruelty to animals at the lab. Video footage showed workers punching a beagle puppy in the face, dissecting a live monkey, falsifying scientific data, and violating countless sections of the animal welfare act. Huntingdon defended some of these practices saying, for example, that the monkey was under anesthesia. Its leadership condemned the violent actions against the dogs, fired the perpetrators, and three lab technicians were subsequently convicted of animal cruelty, a first for laboratory employees in the U.K.⁵ Since 1999, SHAC activists have campaigned globally against the lab and its investors, bringing attention to the violations and pressing the lab to the brink of closure until it dropped off the New York Stock Exchange. In 2009 the lab was purchased by a private owner. Just prior to this acquisition, Bloomberg's 2008 annual

³ Andy Stepanian, "November 22, 2006 Writing From Prison," The SHAC 7, <http://www.shac7.com/andy/index.htm> (accessed September 15, 2012).

⁴ Center for Constitutional Rights, "U. S. v. SHAC 7," <http://ccrjustice.org/us-v-SHAC7> (accessed September 1, 2012).

⁵ BBC News, "A Controversial Laboratory," entry posted on January 18, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/1123837.stm (accessed February 8, 2013).

report showed HLS to have revenues of over \$240 million and an operating profit of nearly fifteen percent.⁶

In spite of its nonviolent platform, some SHAC activists have been accused of threats, blackmail, arson, and assault of HLS personnel or financial backers. However, the six SHAC activists convicted in 2006 of violating the Animal Enterprise Protection Act were not convicted for violent crimes. As one website claims, “They were never accused of actually smashing windows, liberating animals or even attending demonstrations, but rather reporting on and encouraging others to engage in legal demonstrations and supporting the ideology of direct action.”⁷ Their words alone were sufficient to convict them of terrorism, and in a post 9-11 world, each received federal prison sentences of three to six years.

The connection between activism and a kind of religious sentiment expressed by the ALF website and Stepanian’s letter is not about a specific doctrine, denomination, or tradition. Rather, the link between the two belies a perception of one’s own life as inseparable from the wider matrix of vulnerable, evocative, and responsive existents. Contemporary animal theorists, emerging from a plethora of largely secular disciplines, have been skeptical of any universal metaphysics—or overarching frameworks explaining the nature of reality—that might qualify as traditionally “religious.” However, some are beginning to gesture toward the need for a more comprehensive approach to human/animal relations that moves beyond pure secularism.

⁶ Bloomberg, “LRS Announces Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2008 Results,” <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aQbXuxCXzquQ> (accessed September 1, 2012).

⁷ Break the Chains Blog, “SHAC7 – Kevin Kjonaas Released,” Break the Chains, entry posted on August 4, 2011, <http://breakallchains.blogspot.com/2011/08/shac-7-kevin-kjonaas-released.html> (August 16, 2012).

As I will explore shortly, the cross-pollination of “secular” activism and theory with certain metaphysical or spiritual strands within CAS is not only about ontological revision, political calculations, and personal ethical change. Rather, it blends these together in tentative steps toward what Matthew Calarco calls the “proto-ontological,” or as Anat Pick names it, “a religious, not alone a philosophical, register.”⁸ These claims press toward, not new antagonisms between disciplines, but a more adequate and integrated lens through which to consider the creative advance of existence as immanently felt and bound together in some actual and fundamental—though not fixed—aspect that “goes beyond an appeal to experiences we can assume all humans share, or recognize”⁹ Theorists and activists are becoming increasingly skeptical of empiricism, ethics, and politics alone as capable of motivating comprehensive change. Although each mark a valuable attempt to address the treatment of animals, these approaches still privilege human consciousness, epistemology, sense perception, and thought, while perpetuating an implicit western construction separating “secular” philosophy from “mystical” religion. Critical attention is being turned toward the neglected matrix of relational existence that is not beholden to these humanist institutions or post-Enlightenment divisions.

1. The Evolution of Critical Animal Studies

Steve Best, a leading voice in the philosophy of direct action describes a new approach to animal liberation that is not only about personal choices such as eating a meat- and dairy-free diet, but also requires a comprehensive and integrative rethinking of

⁸ Anat Pick, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 17

⁹ Pick, *Creaturely Poetics*, 17.

relational systems at every level, from commerce to governmental regulations. In Best's view, the animal liberation movement must be based on a:

radical social approach to veganism and animal rights that transcends bourgeois liberalism; the need for a global Left that renounces speciesism and all other ancient and lingering prejudices and forms of oppression; the need for post-hierarchical worldviews and democratic and ecological societies; and the need for total liberation and revolutionary transformation.¹⁰

This level of cosmopolitical reformation resonates with revolutionary pulses of a Copernican kind. Anthropocentrism was theoretically defeated when Copernicus discovered that the universe did not revolve around the earth or its most conceited inhabitants. Bad theology and metaphysics were denounced in the public square. Namely, an all-powerful, changeless Deity who had made the world for the sake of humanity, and who that very humanity lived to serve or fear, no longer held final sway. In this reoriented world, a refurbished and independent humanism found a political voice and renewed sense of self through the narratives of evolutionary science, the elevation of consciousness, language, and tool use as higher-order functions, the growth of technology and material domination, the arts, and the flourishing of the secular humanities for interrogating the religious, political, and cultural dimensions of human experience.

This secularized world did not need an overarching narrative of meaning. In fact, as I described in the introduction, theorists within the humanities set about exposing the last vestiges of transcendent universals that diminish the value of the changing material world and subaltern populations, reinscribe and mirror exclusive patriarchal power, and justify violence against those who are different. The humanities have pushed us to rethink

¹⁰ Steve Best, "Manifesto for Radical Abolitionism: By Any Means Necessary," Animal Liberation Front, entry posted November 13, 2009, <http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/Manifesto-TotalLib.htm> (accessed August 25, 2012).

these violations by redefining what it means to be human, even taking us so far toward posthumanism that humanity is emptied of any fixed identity altogether. “[T]he decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatics, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore,” according to posthumanist author Cary Wolfe.¹¹ This hybridized development “points toward the necessity of new theoretical paradigms . . . a new mode of thought that comes after the cultural repression and fantasies, the philosophical evasions, of humanism as a historically specific phenomenon.”¹² In what amounts to the posthumanist mantra: *We have never been human.*

This has been an explosively productive space for Critical Animal Studies (CAS), the most recent emergent discipline to address institutionalized violence toward animals and the discursive limits of human/animal relations. The rise of CAS, according to Best, the co-founder of the Institute for Critical Animal Studies, results from an increased interest of animal studies more broadly, bringing it “from the theoretical margins toward the academic mainstream.”¹³ This shift, according to Best, is both “laudable and lamentable.” As he explains:

[A]s animal studies becomes a potential force of enlightenment and change in public attitudes and behaviors toward animals, its academic proponents can only advance it by currying for respect, credibility, and acceptance, which can only come by domesticating the threatening nature of the critique of human supremacism, Western dualism, and the human exploitation of nonhuman animals.¹⁴

¹¹ Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xv.

¹² Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?*, xvi.

¹³ Steve Best, “The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: Putting Theory into Action and Animal Liberation into Higher Education,” *State of Nature: An Online Journal of Radical Ideas*, <http://www.stateofnature.org/theRiseOfCriticalAnimal.html> (September 17, 2012).

¹⁴ Best, “The Rise of Critical Animal Studies” (blog).

Mainstream animal studies, however, did not begin quite so mainstream. Every different approach sounded dissonant notes within the status quo of their own context. Calarco describes the intellectual evolution of three distinct approaches to theory and practice concerning animals that have emerged over the last few decades, namely the approaches of Identity, Difference, as well as “an emerging third approach” he labels Indistinction.

1.1. Identity

Calarco’s triadic approach parses the various streams of animal rights scholarship according to the onto-political assumptions driving each one. Though each stream indeed speaks to animal welfare, they do so in very different ways and through very different commitments. Activists do well to attend to these distinctions, as they matter a great deal when it comes to theorizing, structuring, and implementing comprehensive approaches to total liberation. Every secular philosophy of animal rights is anchored in metaphysical presuppositions that activists must examine closely lest we perpetuate a perspective that ultimately undermines our vision and aims.

The identity-based approach is characterized by the attempt “to establish a relevantly similar moral identity between human beings and animals.”¹⁵ This approach denotes full acceptance of the Darwinian evolutionary account of the relatedness of all species and then requires one to impartially extend equal moral consideration to all beings *who have interests*, regardless where they fall on the evolutionary spectrum. In sum, a similar moral identity between humans and animals is based on biological relatedness and common interests. Consequentialists like Peter Singer take this approach one way, emphasizing the shared fact of sentience and preferences between animals and humans. Deontological philosophers like Tom Regan take it another, underscoring the

¹⁵ Matthew Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” *New Centennial Review* 11, no. 2 (2012): 42.

shared subjectivity of humans and animals which “entails being granted inherent, noninstrumental value.”¹⁶

Calarco credits identity approaches with getting animal ethics into the academic landscape, resisting hierarchical distinctions between human/animal, and exposing the “hidden harms” of “speciesist practices” within dominant society.¹⁷ But for Calarco, speciesism was misidentified as the main problem in this approach. Anthropocentrism was the real culprit and having slipped under the radar, it continues to plague identity-based theories. Social, legal, ethical, and economic institutions of the west have historically centered on a human defined by strict criteria of subjectivity, rationality, moral agency, etc. Identity-based approaches proliferate and extend this logic of anthropocentrism by privileging human reason and human-centered norms within ethical encounter and theorization. They also base moral consideration of animals on demonstrated similarity to normative human traits, “while denigrating or giving subordinate status to those animals who do not ‘properly’ resemble human beings.”¹⁸ In Singer’s utilitarianism and Regan’s subject-of-a-life, only certain creatures are included and even they remain subordinate to human value.

Because of the individualistic assumptions inherent in normative theory, identity-based approaches encourage incremental personal or legal changes, but are unable to support wide scale social transformation.¹⁹ They also tend toward intellectual insularity rather than embodied engagement. Best lambasts mainstream animal studies as being “co-opted, tamed, and neutralized by academia,” characterized by:

immersion in abstraction, indulgent use of existing and new modes of jargon, pursuit of theory-for-theory's sake, avoidance of social controversy (however intellectually controversial it may often be), eschewing political involvement, and

¹⁶ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 43.

¹⁷ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 43.

¹⁸ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 46.

¹⁹ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 44.

keeping a very safe distance from ‘extremists’ and ‘radicals’ agitating for animal rights.²⁰

Finally, the exclusive extension of ethical concern only to those bodies most like humans estrange identity-based approaches from other environmental or minoritarian justice struggles, such as queer, indigenous, feminist, or anti-colonialist, who are marginalized specifically because they “have never been accepted as fully human by dominant anthropocentric institutional and cultural standards.”²¹ According to Calarco, such movements do not want *into* the anthropocentric club, they want *out* of it, a one-way ticket away from metaphysics and institutions that perpetuate violently normative anthropocentric logic.

1.2 Difference.

The second approach does not seek to extend ethical consideration based on one’s similarity to humans. On the contrary, difference-based approaches seek to trouble the human/animal distinction, by focusing on the “potential interruptions, crossings, and transformations created by radicalized notions of difference,” most notably associated with Jacques Derrida.²²

Though I will discuss this in more detail shortly, Derrida rejected a metaphysics of presence that was predicated both on human subjectivity (i.e., being “present to” experience) and on an explicit anthropocentric exclusion of the nonhuman. His concept of *différance* fueled his deconstructive approach that insists, not on similarity, but “that differences between human beings and animals do exist and should be maintained.”²³ *Différance* has two aspects. Rebekah Sinclair helpfully describes them as difference and

²⁰ Best, “The Rise of Critical Animal Studies” (blog).

²¹ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 47.

²² Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 48.

²³ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 50.

deferral.²⁴ To be *different* is the spatial component. “It implies every body, act, event, and thought is not only different from every other but also different from itself—changing from moment to moment.”²⁵ To *defer* is the temporal component. It means we are always putting off our assumption that we have fully understood other bodies.²⁶ I am always chasing after a meaning I can never capture. As soon as I think I have caught it, it evades me again. *Différance* claims each body is different, an “unsubstitutable singularity,”²⁷ according to Derrida, that cannot be adequately described by homogenized categories of “The Human” or “The Animal.” These designations are always plural, populated with bodies that are changing and thus our understanding of them is always deferred.

As Best points out, CAS follows numerous other theories of history—poststructuralism, postmodernity, and feminism—that utilized the method of deconstruction to dismantle binaries that were “pivotal to Western ideology and hierarchical rule.”²⁸ A difference-based approach disables hierarchy in that it denies any fixed essence that could unify an ontological, political, or taxonomic category or subject. Applied to animals, variations among species and the effect of innumerable relations between and among a single body, not to mention between other bodies, make an essentialized character or inherent qualities impossible to name. As Calarco writes, “Traces of animal lives, individuals, species, and other affects are found throughout those many arenas of human life that are thought to be exclusively human; and the reverse is also true in the case of the many animal species that human beings have affected.”²⁹ In this way, any critical animal studies is always already what Best calls a “critical human

²⁴ Rebekah Sinclair and Brianne Donaldson, “Ethics of Irreducibility: Cultivating Habits of Thought for Critical Animal Studies” (paper presentation at the European Conference for Critical Animal Studies at Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic, October 15-16, 2011).

²⁵ Sinclair and Donaldson, “Ethics of Irreducibility.”

²⁶ Sinclair and Donaldson, “Ethics of Irreducibility.”

²⁷ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 9.

²⁸ Best, “The Rise of Critical Animal Studies” (blog).

²⁹ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 51.

studies,” in so far as, “animal” is no longer referring only to the nonhuman, but to the way in which the ontology of human and animal is irrevocably hybridized. As singer Neko Case croons, “I’m an Animal. You’re an Animal too.”³⁰ Furthermore, “animal” is a direct result of humans constructing “their own ‘natures’ and that of other animals . . . through fallacious dualisms and the distorting lens of speciesism.”³¹ CAS implies an analysis of “how the discourse of the ‘human’ has been constituted in dualistic, speciesist, racist, patriarchal, and imperialist terms.”³² By defining what humans are or have, we define what other bodies are not or have not. As described in the introduction, CAS points out how the transcendent logic of the human-as-ideal perpetuates a naturalized lack in the nonhuman real.

The multiplication and complication of human/animal differences avoids many pitfalls of logocentrism and anthropocentrism. For example, Derrida helpfully “locates the (proto-)ethical encounter” in precognitive relations, meaning relations that we are not fully conscious of. This move “opens up the scope of ethics beyond any ultimately determinable limit.”³³ By opening ethics up to the nonconscious realm, Derrida asserts that any event or thing can take on ethical import in that anything can “interrupt one’s mode of existence and have a transformative effect.”³⁴ In such a view, Derrida can boldly assert that “responsibility is excessive or it is not a responsibility.”³⁵

But Calarco also notes that other problems persist. Derrida himself did not participate in militant struggles for justice, especially where animals were concerned, so he is certainly not a go-to for strategic reflections on policy or social alternatives. Additionally, Derrida’s maintenance of the human/animal distinction — what Calarco

³⁰ Neko Case, “I’m an Animal,” *Middle Cyclone*, ANTI-label (CD), 2009.

³¹ Best, “The Rise of Critical Animal Studies” (blog).

³² Best, “The Rise of Critical Animal Studies” (blog).

³³ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 51.

³⁴ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 52.

³⁵ Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, “‘Eating Well,’ or The Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida,” in *Who Comes After the Subject?* ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, Jean-Luc Nancy (New York: Routledge, 1991), 118.

calls “one of the most saturated and exhausted distinctions in the Western metaphysical tradition”—preserves a privileged place for the human, revealing that complication of the binary is not enough.³⁶ Derrida domesticates *différance* as a unifying feature of all life, stopping its operations at the designation of species, what he sees as “abyssal gaps”³⁷ between “those who call themselves men and what so-called men, those who name themselves men, call the animal.”³⁸ He states, “I believe that there is a radical discontinuity between what one calls animals . . . and man.”³⁹ He goes on, “The gap between ‘higher primates’ and man is in any case abyssal, but this is also true for the gap between the ‘higher primates’ and other animals.”⁴⁰ At the end, Derrida reinstates a hierarchy of higher and lower life through the categories of species rather than emphasizing the singularity emphasized through processes of *différance*. Calarco asks “Is it not possible to invent other concepts, groupings, and frameworks that create the conditions for more promising forms of resistance and alternative practices in this domain?”⁴¹ Enter the third approach: Indistinction.

1.3. Indistinction

Indistinction seeks to “render inoperative any nostalgia for extending human traits to animals or for complicating the differences between human beings and animals.”⁴² Like Bohr’s theory of indeterminacy in physics described in the first chapter, proceeding from a space of radical indistinction means that we give up the “guardrail” of fixed identity, in this case the human/animal binary. It may still come into play strategically, and we may need it to speak as a middle axiom within current political or ethical debates,

³⁶ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 53.

³⁷ Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow? A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2004), 66.

³⁸ Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 30.

³⁹ Derrida and Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow?* 72-3.

⁴⁰ Derrida and Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow?* 66.

⁴¹ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 54.

⁴² Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 54.

but indistinction requires “ontological innovation”⁴³ that might succeed in transforming our collective ways of thinking and living that the other two approaches have been unable to inspire. New kinds of logic and perspectives are needed, not to bring the animal up, but to liberate the human down and out—a “shocking reduction,” as Val Plumwood says⁴⁴—“from the magisterial heights of human superiority and outward toward an essentially nonhuman and inhuman zone.”⁴⁵ I admit that I love this down-n-out trope, considering its ubiquity in the best blues and honky-tonk ballads. Our planetary futures will be accompanied by these tunes of indistinction, where the singer is not only missing her lover, her job, or her cash, but her very identity as a privileged human.

Liberating the human into “zones of indistinction” fits nicely into Ralph Acampora’s attempt to craft a new material phenomenology based on “corporeal compassion”—or vulnerable exposure between bodies—in what he calls, “zones of conviviality,” meaning a “context shared by animate organisms occupying the same ecoregional environs.”⁴⁶ Such an approach is dependent on entertaining a “robustly biocentric, rather than a constrictively anthropographic, sense of history,” writes Acampora.⁴⁷

Calarco looks at numerous examples of indistinction—from Donna Haraway’s posthuman cyborg or companion species manifestos, to Gilles Deleuze’s analysis of Francis Bacon’s meat paintings in which we glimpse a shared vulnerability with other creatures that renders us undone in some fundamental way. Theories of indistinction require major shifts of perspective that reveal entirely different modes of relating than current thought allows. The point then, for Calarco, is not to immediately kick start a new ontological project, but to tarry in, what he calls the “proto-ontological plane,” where we

⁴³ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 55.

⁴⁴ Val Plumwood, “Being Prey,” *Utne Reader*, July-Aug 2000, 61.

⁴⁵ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 56.

⁴⁶ Ralph R. Acampora, *Corporeal Compassion: Animal Ethics and Philosophy of the Body* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2006), 33.

⁴⁷ Acampora, *Corporeal Compassion*, 33.

see the limits of existing ethical structures and ontological ordering mechanisms. What is the proto-ontological plane?

Like Derrida's proto-ethical encounter, "proto" gestures toward something prior to or more basic. In Derrida's case, proto-ethical refers to the precognitive relations that exist outside the frameworks of conscious thought upon which the discipline of ethics depends. Similarly, the proto-ontological plane includes those aspects of *ontos* (ὄντος), or being, that exist outside our current knowledge regimes, categories of thought, or sense perception. From the perspective of this plane, we have a much better vantage point from which to judge, according to Calarco, the "radical inadequacy of existing materialist and biopolitical analyses, almost all of which are narrowly and dogmatically anthropocentric."⁴⁸ Calarco's point is simple: The human cannot function as an explanatory mechanism for a much more basic, or *proto*, aspect of being, or ontology. On the contrary, the proto-ontological plane may have a great deal of explanatory power for reconceiving classical ontologies of the "human."

Classical religious and metaphysical frameworks, with their ancient and lingering prejudices, will not get this project off the ground. As Best explains, ". . . critical theorists reject Platonic metaphysics and notions that natural, human, and conceptual realities are grounded in or reflect some unchanging substance or essence."⁴⁹ Further, Best is critical of any religious commitment that is merely "internalizing the capitalist ideology of liberal individualism" while failing to expose the "the ideological hegemony . . . mired in Western dualisms and the construction of false oppositions such as between production/consumption, individual/social, and psychological/institutional . . ."⁵⁰ Indistinction looks to a messy plane of indeterminate relations to destabilize, not only the human/animal divide, but also those institutions structured on that distinction.

⁴⁸ Calarco, "Identity, Difference, Indistinction," 58-9.

⁴⁹ Best, "Rise of Critical Animal Studies" (blog).

⁵⁰ Best, "Manifesto for Radical Abolitionism" (blog).

2. A Cosmological Gap in the Field

The failure of classical metaphysics or liberal religion is not the end of the story. In spite of understandable resistance to traditional metaphysical categories and anthropocentric limitations, numerous critical theorists are hinting toward the need for a broader framing of experiential life that does not take the human, human senses, epistemology, or consciousness as its primary point of reference. Indeed identity- and difference-based approaches claim to reject metaphysics, but as Calarco demonstrates, a certain (anthropocentric) metaphysics *is* at work in these theories that is too often covered over by the alleged western split between “secular” philosophy as the new ideal and “mystical” religion as the lesser real.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James demonstrates the polarization of rational philosophy from the feeling or belief of religion. He begins his lecture on Philosophy asking, “Is the sense of divine presence a sense of anything objectively true?”

We turned first to mysticism for an answer, and found that although mysticism is entirely willing to corroborate religion, it is too private (and also too various) in its utterances to be able to claim a universal authority. But philosophy publishes results which claim to be universally valid if they are valid at all, so we now turn with our question to philosophy. Can philosophy stamp a warrant of veracity upon the religious man’s sense of the divine?⁵¹

The segregation of philosophy as neutral, rational arbiter of truth from religion or mysticism as personal and otherworldly sterilized both disciplines. The mystical and poetic elements were culled from the “mainstream”⁵² philosophical tradition of the west, and the roots of African, Egyptian, and Indian thought that influenced the likes of

⁵¹ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, Gifford Lectures, 1901-2 (Glasgow: Collins, 1977), 414.

⁵² Jorge Gracia, *Philosophy and Its History: Issues in Philosophical Historiography* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 2-7. Gracia describes three threads of philosophy: mainstream, poetic, and critical.

Herodotus, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle among others, were obscured in a binary opposition pitting philosophy—as the standard bearer of secular rationalization—against mysticism or religion as “the nemesis or antithesis of ‘the philosophical.’”⁵³ This binary construction not only created a new hierarchy of authority but the dichotomies of Enlightenment thought that shape western society—like social versus individual, science versus religion, institutional religion versus personal spirituality, secular versus sacred, rational versus irrational, male versus female—also relegated anything deemed religious, spiritual, or mystic, to the margins of society as a private phenomenon unable to challenge power and authority.⁵⁴

As Richard King points out in *Orientalism and Religion*, “The privatization of mysticism—that is, the increasing tendency to locate the mystical in the psychological realm of personal experiences—serves to exclude it from political issues such as social justice.”⁵⁵ He continues,

Mysticism thus becomes seen as a personal matter of cultivating inner states of tranquility and equanimity, which rather than seeking to transform the world, serve to accommodate the individual to the status quo through the alleviation of anxiety and stress. In this way, mysticism becomes thoroughly domesticated.⁵⁶

Thus, when CAS scholars and activists press beyond the traditional boundaries of philosophy (or socio-politico-ethico frameworks), they not only challenge the split of human/animal, but also undermine the historical bifurcation of rational secularism and mystical religion that has gone too long ignored. One task for CAS is to make this challenge explicit and to reject the domestication and marginalization of all metaphysical views as “religious” in any self-evident way, or as “mystical,” private, or other-worldly.

⁵³ Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Post-colonial Theory, India, and the ‘Mystic East,’* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 27.

⁵⁴ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 13.

⁵⁵ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 21.

⁵⁶ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 21.

Lumping numerous and varied metaphysical perspectives under a singular dismissive heading that is always and already prevented from affecting public discourse and policy is another form of de-realization that hinders productive theoretical clashes that may serve CAS to more deeply engage pressing social and planetary issues.

It is imperative that I foreground this challenge in the context of the current project since I will be examining the metaphysical systems of Process and Jainism that are not predicated on the bifurcation of reason and feeling or sacred and secular. More importantly, paying special attention to the lingering inheritance of Orientalism is an essential task when I engage Jainism, one of many traditions dismissed as part of the “Mystic East” whose systematic thought has, according to King, “been excluded from the realm of philosophical debate on the grounds that [it is] tainted with ‘theological’ assumptions that are culture-specific (as if this were not the case in the West).”⁵⁷ Enlightenment binaries do not hold in these traditions, nor can they be laid upon them as interpretive frameworks.

Calarco’s description of indistinction is, to my mind, as much a search for a more adequate ontology as it is a commentary about a blind spot in the field of CAS specifically obscured by the tacit bifurcation of “secular” philosophy from “mystical” religion. To put it another way, distinct metaphysical positions *do* percolate implicitly within existing animal theory, but because identity and difference-based approaches locate themselves in the stream of secularism, the metaphysical assumptions go unquestioned. Further, this intellectual deception forecloses genuine philosophical engagement with any “nonanthropocentric ontologies,” that Calarco sees as potentially helpful to the future of the discipline. Only by putting metaphysics back on the table can CAS begin to engage with past and current ontologies that might redirect the terms of

⁵⁷ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 28.

critical animal thought and support transformative personal and collective changes of the socioeconomic mechanisms of capture.⁵⁸

Calarco is compelled by the work of speculative realists, many of whom I mentioned in Chapter One, who each construct a materialist reworking of Deleuze and challenge the continental tradition of meaning which remains intractably humanist. A true account of materiality, according to realist thinker Ray Brassier, must move us counterintuitively toward disenchantment, toward the proto-ontological plane, where human valuations are not central, if even applicable.⁵⁹ Political theorist Jane Bennett's recent book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* also provides a materialist account of nonhuman things as the basis for a new political ecology.⁶⁰ As described earlier, physicist Karen Barad, building off Neils Bohr's notion of indeterminacy, has also helpfully crafted a perspective on matter—what she calls “agential realism”—that reorients philosophy toward the nonhuman agency of material life. None of these thinkers deal specifically with the treatment of animals, nor are any explicitly “religious.” Yet, I agree with Calarco that real change for animals does not only require us to finally move away from the human/animal distinction (either similarities or differences), but also requires that that we investigate more general accounts of how experience of all kinds develops beyond the strict limits of positivistic science and the self-identity of “rational” philosophy on a more general, less personal or anthropocentric—indeed a metaphysical—level.

Fortunately, many CAS scholars are overcoming the allergy to metaphysics that has hindered its theoretical development. Numerous theorists and activists are stepping into the gap within animal theory, not necessarily to reclaim “religion,” but out of

⁵⁸ Calarco, “Identity, Difference, Indistinction,” 59.

⁵⁹ Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), xi.

⁶⁰ At the time of this writing, I had not yet read Bennett's book. Upon doing so recently, I found many compatible points of contact between this project and her own, and look forward to engaging her approach to “vital materialities” in the future.

recognition that the last three decades of scholarship has been unable to undermine the growing number of mechanisms arrayed against creaturely life. Best is clear that personal and political changes such as vegan education aren't sufficient to address the multiple industrial complexes arrayed against creatures. In a globalizing world of capitalist expansion and the exportation of dietary habits, Best asserts, "For every person who becomes vegan, a thousand flesh-eaters arise in these rapidly industrializing societies [like China] and elsewhere such as Brazil and South Africa."⁶¹ Elsewhere he writes:

It is time we drop all facile optimism, lift our heads from the sands, and recognize a powerful, singular, and ominous fact: Industrial civilization is unraveling at the seams, and it will be an ugly, brutal, horrifying process as environmental collapse—especially as brought on by global warming—exact a deadly toll. We need completely new paradigms beyond what has informed our thinking in the last five hundred years, the last two thousand years, in the last ten thousand years. These moral and conceptual revolutions must be as bold and shattering of hierarchical and capitalist paradigms as say, Einstein's theory of relativity or quantum mechanics was for classical metaphysics.⁶²

The need for "completely new paradigms" compels us to return to the vacuum created with Copernicus. The bad metaphysics were officially tossed out for their inaccuracy, but no sufficient cosmologies emerged to fill the void. Many in the west hung on to (at least privately) an anthropocentric metaphysics of an omnipotent deity and human exceptionalism. Simultaneously, a public, secular, and independent humanism explained the world through its theories, empiricism, and ambitions. But neither of these provided a way to think about experience in general or about the multiple entanglements in which we live and move and have our own personal (post)human becomings.

One option is to look to new discoveries to hearken in these paradigmatic sea changes. For example, the current research on the Higgs Boson particle may offer insight into why creative innovation exists at all in the universe. But another option, as put forth

⁶¹ Best, "Manifesto for Radical Abolitionism" (blog).

⁶² Best, "Rise of Critical Animal Studies" (blog).

by Calarco, is a renewed attention to the proto-ontological plane. Here it is not only scientific breakthroughs that will help us, but a return to and reworking of existing philosophical and ontological structures, conscious of the humanist prejudices that have plagued and constrained past interpretations, including the very construction of philosophy itself as somehow devoid of and superior to other crucial and diverse means of investigating the living world. Certain metaphysical approaches and even “religious” frameworks accused of severing human/animal partnerships in the past now become a potential source for validating the intra-active and experiential becoming of every existent—we could call it “panexperientialism”⁶³—outside the dominion of anthropocentric, subjectivist, Enlightenment, and Eurocentric frames.

Even within the field of animal studies, a renewed engagement with religion has begun in order to rethink a radically relational cosmology and our ethical obligations to individuals within it. This engagement comes in two primary forms within animal studies. First, revisiting the global religious traditions to see what resources exist there for including animals in our communal calculations. Paul Waldau and Kimberly Patton published a substantial collection of essays in 2006 called *Communion of Subjects*, which dealt with animals from the perspective of multiple religious traditions, as well as from the disciplines of science and ethics. Since then a number of books have emerged on the

⁶³ I choose “panexperientialism” rather than “panpsychism” as advocated by Spinoza, Leibniz, etc., because the cognitive implications of “psyche” are too tied to anthropocentrism, humanism, and traditional binary logic to be of use to the creatureliness of this project. “Experience,” as I conceive it, leaves more imaginative play for rhizomatic modes of co-feeling, perception, and prehension intersected by all kinds of movements, directions, provocations, and responses. Much like Jain karma (see Chapter Four), experience can take place at many planes, times and with many forms. It is not unidirectional, but un/re/folding, mapping an unprogrammed path as it goes. “Panpsychism” seems to extend a kind of evolutionary logic “beyond” the human toward a directional “Omega Point” (of Teilhard de Chardin) or “supermind” (of Śrī Aurobindo).

subject of animals and religion such as Katherine Wills Perlo's *Kinship and Killing: The Animal in World Religions* (2009) and Lisa Kemmerer's recent *Animals and World Religions* (2012). In 2011, *Call to Compassion: Religious Perspectives on Animal Advocacy* was published, edited by Kemmerer and none other than Anthony J. Nocella, who, along with Steve Best, co-founded what is now the Institute for Critical Animal Studies. These books represent an attempt to re-engage traditions through the lens of the Animal and ostensibly to inspire practitioners or readers to engage more fully both the question and treatment of creatures in our midst and those out of sight and out of mind.

The second approach toward a renewed religious engagement with animals is more subtle. It not only attempts to mine religious texts for their pro-animal kernels, but moves beyond that to uncover marginalized voices within traditions—such as St. Isaac—who stand in a long and ancient philosophical line that affirms a co-creativity at the heart of all experience. Carol Adams, renowned for her work on the sexual politics of meat consumption, recently re-entered the discussion on animals and religion in an article she wrote for the University of Chicago Divinity School, in which she lays out five primary ways of addressing the question of meat-eating or animal welfare from within religious perspectives. She also offers her own contribution to move the conversation further. “In my own work,” Adams writes, “I have found the writings of Simone Weil illuminating . . . that all our neighbor requires of us is to ask ‘What are you going through?’ and to be willing to listen to the answer.”⁶⁴ In Adams's query, one hears distinct echoes of the

⁶⁴ Carol J. Adams, “Five Religious Approaches to Thinking about Meat Eating,” *Sightings*, entry posted July 19, 2012, http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications/sightings/archive_2012/0719.shtml (accessed September 20, 2012).

feminist care tradition that she, along with Josephine Donovan and others, were so instrumental in articulating.⁶⁵

Anat Pick, also heavily influenced by Weil's mystic reflections, moves in a slightly different and more explicit direction. In *Creaturely Poetics*, Pick calls for an "antiphilosophical" attention toward universal vulnerability as a relational "expression of something *inhuman* as well . . ." ⁶⁶ For Pick, the issue is not only about caring for animals, but engaging a material vulnerability within all existent bodies. Indeed, Pick's entire project offers a post-secular material account of sacred life that does not depend on subjectivity or personhood. She advocates the "'rehabilitation' of religious discourse in the articulation of a fundamentally new politics and ethics, a new language and art . . ." that "is not only posthumanist and postanthropocentric, but also, and no less significantly, postsecular."⁶⁷ Given the allergy to religious hierarchy as always already skewed toward the Transcendent and away from the creaturely, toward the rational male human and away from the perceptive feminine-animal-earth, this statement is remarkable for its potential to change the discourses of animality as much as the discourses of religion.

And yet Calarco is beckoning us to take the "antiphilosophical" even a step further beyond bodies to the proto-ontological, calling not upon "religion" as such but the disenchanted materialists, who are not, first and foremost, concerned with animals to the degree that Pick and Adams are, nor do they advocate an explicitly "religious" framework to rethink material existence. The drive toward a more fundamental plane of experience is indeed the search for an account of the creative advance of life that is adequate to explain, not only human becoming, but all becomings in their singular and

⁶⁵ See, for example, *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*, ed. Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) and Marti Kheel, *Nature Ethics: An Ecofeminist Perspective* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008). Also, Lori Gruen and Kari Weil, both from Wesleyan University, continue to work on this front.

⁶⁶ Pick, *Creaturely Poetics*, 5.

⁶⁷ Pick, *Creaturely Poetics*, 18.

indeterminate processes of development. It does not start with the first or final aim of discovering human meaning, but seeks what de Landa calls a “flat” ontology, more or less free from human inscriptions of value.⁶⁸ It does not require recourse to supernaturalism, nor does it deify matter as the only existent. The real and ideal aspects of ongoing creative experience must be explored, conjectured, and held together.

CAS must then begin a shift away from the opposition of identity and difference, the question of who and what, to the *how* that is the univocal and shifting ground of a creaturely world-in-process. The way(s) we understand the human or animal must mimic Bohr’s reciprocal definability between our own experience and that of the proto-ontological plane. Our personal perspectives and humanist lenses must be mutually enriched and challenged by something that is not fully personal, in so far as it remains “proto” or presently beyond the scope of fixed categories of secularity, science, rational philosophy, etc. The personal and impersonal, the ontological and proto-ontological, the so-called secular and religious, infuse within a reciprocal definability where the real and ideal potential for a much broader prehension of reality enfold and inform one another. Our personal perspectives of life, value, and identity give way to an analysis of experience at its most strange. Tying ourselves back to this creaturely matrix is a metaphysical move with deep religious resonances. Here metaphysics has the capacity to fuel a massive paradigmatic shift in perspective, empowering revolutions of thought and action no longer domesticated to the socio-political sidelines.

3. From *Who* and *What* to *How*

To close this chapter, I would like to look specifically at the transition between what Calarco calls difference-based approaches and more fluid possibility spaces represented by perspectives of indistinction. CAS theorists have relied heavily on difference-based approaches to problematize the human/animal and subject/object binary,

⁶⁸ Manuel de Landa, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 28.

and significant scholarship is still being produced in this vein. Such work has been invaluable to undermine notions of fixed identity or prescriptive ethics. The field of ethical encounter has been irrevocably thrown open and theorists have been busy surveying the vast revealed landscape.

But I agree with Calarco that difference-based approaches will not be sufficient to fundamentally challenge the socioeconomic institutions and biopolitical discourses in which animal bodies (and all bodies) are currently trapped. Deeper reflection on nonanthropocentric ontologies is needed and continental theory alone cannot get us there. I will offer a brief description of Derrida's post-phenomenological approach before moving toward Judith Butler as a contemporary case study that demonstrates the potential—though not yet realized—shift from difference to indistinction.

3.1. Beyond the (post)phenomenological

For phenomenologists like Heidegger and Husserl, a human was defined by being *personally present* to the experience of being a subject-in-relation, a subject who is affected as experiences come across consciousness. This *phenomenology of presence* was instrumental in the development of identity-based approaches to animal rights, such as Singer's and Regan's extension of sentience or subjective presence to creatures.

3.1a. Derrida. Post-phenomenologists like Derrida, Levinas, and Butler deconstructed the culturally fixed and substantial human—the being who is present to experience—in order to describe the phenomenon of *post-presence*. Here, the “I” can never be fully present to the passing of experience or to a fully knowable other. Identity is fractured and elusive. The phenomenon of post-presence suggests that the deconstructed human, or for Derrida, “the Animal that therefore I am,” can never be fully apprehended or known to the self, nor can an Other. Even to speak of *someone* or *something* is to participate in willful reduction and simplification of an entity that is always changing and beyond our grasp. The “Who” remains a centrally contested speech act.

In a well-known interview with Jean-Luc Nancy, Derrida resists the *who* as too violent a question for two reasons. Foremost, it forces a false unification in the respondent. *Someone* must answer the question of *who*.⁶⁹ Additionally, the demand for a responsive and responsible *who* demarcates a criteria for subjectivity in social, moral, political, and legal frameworks that exclude all life failing to meet those narrow measures. Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*, for example, defines the subject as a *who* "capable of conscience, of language, of a relation to death." The "animal," writes Derrida,

will never be either a subject or *Dasein*. It does not have an unconscious either (Freud), nor a rapport to the other as other, no more than there is an animal face (Levinas). It is from the standpoint of *Dasein* that Heidegger defines the humanity of man.⁷⁰

Derrida gestures toward a wider metaphysical scope beyond the phenomenological subject-as-presence in this interview. Rather than follow Heidegger's *Dasein*, Derrida repurposes Heidegger's "being thrown" as the ontological condition of all life, "more primordial than subjectivity . . . and objectivity as well."⁷¹ Derrida wants to replace the *who* for "something like a place, a unique point of passage."⁷² This move from a *who* to a *how* is an intrinsic aspect of an adequate creaturely cosmology, and the notion of a spatio-temporal point of passage will come in later discussions of Process and Jainism.

How gestures toward a new cosmological framework, not of objects, subjects, or nouns, but a processive verb that is underway in the ongoing development of the living in general. Derrida here shifts from a logic of difference to "processes of *différance*" that are "at work everywhere, which is to say, well beyond humanity."⁷³ Life is a verb of becoming, acts of differentiating, or at the very least nouns with perpetually destabilizing

⁶⁹ Derrida and Nancy, "Eating Well," 100-01.

⁷⁰ Derrida and Nancy, "Eating Well," 105.

⁷¹ Derrida and Nancy, "Eating Well," 106.

⁷² Derrida and Nancy, "Eating Well," 99.

⁷³ Derrida and Nancy, "Eating Well," 109.

movement, an “experience of opening . . .”⁷⁴ Derrida demonstrates that a *how* does not fit well into any political, personal, juridical, ethical or democratic framework, each of which demand a responsible *who*. Certainly, a *who* helps us define a responsible actor, not to mention the *what* that responsibility is directed toward. But in demanding a *who*, we disappear the incalculable process that resists and exceeds this static, reductive call.⁷⁵

The challenge is to retain an appreciation of *this particular who* through the very act of seeking the indeterminate *how*. Derrida turns us away from active subjects to interrogate “different modes of the conception-appropriation-assimilation of the other”⁷⁶ inherent in the living in general, by which he gets to the point of his interview. If life is best understood as activities of “conception-appropriation-assimilation of the other,” as exemplified in the act of eating, he asks, “*how* for goodness sake should one eat well? And what does this imply? What is eating?”⁷⁷ Derrida never formally theorized this cosmological question.

Thus, we are left to pick up where he left off. This means, at minimum, that we must make two difficult but necessary moves at the same time: first, to investigate processes of *différance* as a univocal *how* that applies to the widest and most impersonal scope of existence, and second, not to lose sight of the “realness” of these processes as having some persistent character, perception, or personality even amidst continuous change. The *other* that Derrida is concerned about in the process of “conception-appropriation-assimilation” still matters, though the way we conceptualize that identity or our relation with it requires a major overhaul that undermines every dominant framework of individualism or subjectivity. The question for us becomes how to preserve the realness of entities without stagnating or isolating the experiential processes of that reality.

⁷⁴ Derrida and Nancy, “Eating Well,” 110.

⁷⁵ Derrida and Nancy, “Eating Well,” 110.

⁷⁶ Derrida and Nancy, “Eating Well,” 114.

⁷⁷ Derrida and Nancy, “Eating Well,” 115.

3.1b. Butler. Judith Butler makes an attempt at this very task, though she has historically limited her efforts to the political register of the human. As a theorist of difference relying heavily on Derrida, but also Foucault and Levinas, Butler pushes the post-phenomenological analysis into the political sphere where one has a responsibility to a distinct *other*. Though she never addresses the question of the animal explicitly, numerous critical animal theorists find her work indispensable for theorizing the political inclusion of animals. Butler's primary contribution to political theory has been that of the "irreducibility," or the notion that every body is a singular, unrepeatable, radically individual, historically contingent other.⁷⁸ According to Sinclair, Butler's affirmation of irreducibility has two dimensions: first, she finds the irreducible other in Levinas' ethical figure of the face, whose existence cannot be assessed in knowledge or language. Second, following Foucault, Butler asserts that bodies only become knowable and intelligible to us when we rely on normative discourses—or frameworks of recognition—like gender, sex, or species that necessarily domesticate and simplify the irreducible other.⁷⁹

While Butler uniquely advocates and defends irreducibility, she does so, as already mentioned, primarily for "human" bodies, and not *all* bodies. Kelly Oliver laments that "the new kinship that [Butler] imagines still excludes animals,"⁸⁰ and Chloë Taylor argues that "[Butler] repeatedly excludes animals from the sphere of ethical consideration."⁸¹ Sinclair makes the oversight clear, "[Butler] doesn't need to explicitly claim the human is higher, different, or better than the animal if she is actively performing this difference by the exclusion of certain bodies . . . This is how Butler

⁷⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990; repr., New York: Routledge, 2007), xxvii.

⁷⁹ Sinclair and Donaldson, "Ethics of Irreducibility."

⁸⁰ Kelly Oliver, *Animal Lesson: How They Teach Us To Be Human* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 226.

⁸¹ Chloë Taylor, "The Precarious Lives of Animals: Butler, Coetzee, and Animal Ethics," *Philosophy Today* 52 (1): 61.

creates the ‘animal’ —by choosing to say that certain bodies do not belong in her writing and are not subjects worthy of equal defense.”⁸²

In spite of this silence, Butler is still utilized by theorists to rethink the political state of animal bodies. James Stanescu utilizes Butler’s work in *Precarious Life* and *Frames of War* as a theoretical model for CAS insofar as “Butler develops vulnerability and precariousness as an ethic, a social ontology, and a politics.”⁸³ Stanescu highlights a collection of fragments within Butler’s work where she extends this vulnerable social ontology beyond the human —and beyond the cultural and sociopolitical influences that constitute us—to include “relations to the environment and to non-human forms of life.”⁸⁴ Stanescu argues that any ethics or ontology based on precarity must include animals. “Such a politics,” by Stanescu’s reading, “. . . is based on our shared embodiment and becomes a way of addressing the violent political realities of the contemporary situation.”⁸⁵

Stephanie Jenkins picks up this same thread when she examines Butler’s notion of grievability as a measuring stick for whose life counts and can thus be mourned in the public square. For Jenkins, the political status of animals is akin to Butler’s analysis of media representation during wartime, as “‘subjects’ who are not quite recognizable as subjects . . . ‘lives’ that are not quite—or indeed, are never—recognized as lives.”⁸⁶ Jenkins argues that animals are absent from the theatre of mourning or public grief only because they have first been excluded from subjectivity or value. Thus their deaths do not register in life of the polis. She employs Butler to revalue animal lives currently omitted

⁸² Sinclair and Donaldson, “Ethics of Irreducibility.”

⁸³ James Stanescu, “Species Trouble: Judith Butler, Mourning, and the Precarious Lives of Animals,” *Hypatia* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 575.

⁸⁴ Stanescu, “Species Trouble,” 575

⁸⁵ Stanescu, “Species Trouble,” 575.

⁸⁶ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009), 4.

by frames of recognition, even “a life that lives below my ability to apprehend it . . .”⁸⁷ Jenkins asserts that the process of becoming vegan is a transformative progression by which one “acknowledges the making-killable of animal others as a violent act.”⁸⁸ For Jenkins, a feminist-vegan ethics stands as a political, personal, and practical rejection of that violence.

I argue that Butler’s social ontology is politically helpful but cosmologically deficient. Although I support Stanescu’s and Jenkins’ reappropriation of Butler toward a personal and political shift for animals, it is precisely the lack of a comprehensive metaphysics of becoming and panexperientialism—in Butler’s work as well as their own—that reinscribes new boundaries of who counts and who does not. While Jenkins is understandably concerned with the making-killable (and making publicly grievable) of animal bodies, it is not clear at all that Butler’s social ontology can offer an adequate account of “a life that lives below my ability to apprehend it . . .” Such a life falls outside the onto-phenomenological framings that Butler describes in *Frames of War* and *Precarious Life*. Personal politics falter when it comes to making-grievable processes that exist beyond our present emotional and/or sensory thresholds.

In spite of Butler’s personal commitment toward precarious life, she is never able to theorize a cosmology wide enough to conceive of the truly strange. Though she troubles the human-animal binary through her difference-based approach, she fails to move toward a theory of indistinction. Her focus on the political present is crucial, but is ultimately limited by a post-presence phenomenology that remains tied to an arbitrary personal politics that *might* admit an animal as grievable—insofar as one recognizes a familiar vulnerability within it. Here we see that Butler also replays an identity-based

⁸⁷ Stephanie Jenkins, “Returning the Ethical and Political to Animal Studies,” *Hypatia* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 508.

⁸⁸ Jenkins, “Returning the Ethical,” 508.

approach even as she advocates for a post-presence theory of difference. But what of those lives that fall outside of our frames of recognition as mournable or grievable?

Like Derrida's eventual reinscription of the difference between humans and animals, Butler shows us the precise limitations of her ontological deconstruction when she makes a uniquely anthropocentric characteristic—that of mourning or grief—central to her theory, a point I will return to in the sixth chapter. Though animal behaviorists have argued that animals also feel grief, such a comparison keeps us in the realm of identity-based approaches toward human/animal relations and fails to move us beyond the anthropocentric register.⁸⁹ To my knowledge, at this time Butler has only attempted to truly engage a more general cosmological perspective in one setting and that was in relation to Process Philosophy and the metaphysical work of Alfred North Whitehead.⁹⁰ I will delve into Whitehead's system more fully in the next chapter. For now, I offer an analysis of Butler's engagement with Process, a side of her work that few theorists are likely to have encountered. In revisiting Process metaphysics, Butler offers an example of what it means to move from a difference-based approach toward the wider proto-ontological field of indistinction that not only challenges the human/animal split, but also the bifurcation of rationalism and feeling. That Whitehead's Process thought enabled this shift is indicative of the importance of reclaiming metaphysics for animal and planetary liberation.

4. Performativity as Cosmological Provocations

In 2009, Butler traveled to Claremont, California for a conference exploring the links between her own poststructural/postphenomenological thought and Whitehead's Process metaphysics. Butler wrote a paper for that event in which she examines the basic

⁸⁹ See, for example, work by Marc Bekoff, Frans de Wahl, Jane Goodall, and Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson.

⁹⁰ Judith Butler, "On This Occasion . . .," *Butler on Whitehead: On the Occasion*, ed. Roland Faber, Michael Halewood, and Deena M. Lin (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012).

aspect of experience in Whitehead's cosmos, what he calls "the actual occasion," or as he says elsewhere, "the final real things of which the universe is made up."⁹¹ By Butler's account, she had studied Whitehead at two different times during college, once in relation to pragmatism and once in relation to American philosophy more generally, when doing research on Whitehead's contemporary William James.⁹² She came to Claremont because a number of Process philosophers had begun to make connections between her work and Whitehead's Process cosmology. Bruno Latour, a significant influence for Butler, also caught her attention when he called Whitehead the most important metaphysician of the twentieth century.⁹³

Her purpose in Claremont was to re-member, as she put it, "a certain forgetfulness about my early encounters with Whitehead's texts" in order to explore the ways that encounter may have acted on her, and was perhaps still acting on her.⁹⁴ In returning to his books, she found that her marginalia mostly filled the pages of a chapter titled "Objects and Subjects" in Whitehead's *Adventures of Ideas*. Butler was stopped by a sentence that read, in part, "The basis of experience is emotional . . . the basic fact is the rise of an affective tone originating from things whose relevance is given."⁹⁵ I will give a more detailed explication of Whitehead's peculiar use of language in the next chapter. For now it suffices to say that newcomers might find it daunting to enter into a speculative philosophical system whose language does not easily map onto the world in traditional ways. But as we have seen from Calarco and Best, an adequate animal liberation theory

⁹¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Gifford Lectures, 1927-28, corr. ed., ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 18.

⁹² Judith Butler, "On This Occasion," 4.

⁹³ Bruno Latour, "What Is Given in Experience," review of *Penser avec Whitehead*, by Isabelle Stengers, *Boundary* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 222-237.

⁹⁴ Butler, "On This Occasion," 4.

⁹⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (1933; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1967), 176.

will require strange languaging and new epistemological and conceptual innovation that moves us outside humanist frameworks and existing vocabularies.

Whitehead uses a unique grammar that requires patience to learn. But keep in mind that he was trying to develop a general metaphysical scheme by which every aspect of the universe could be explained. Human experience could not be the starting point for that project, nor could any adequate cosmology of experience merely conform to our usual discourses and common definitions. Butler had landed on a passage in which language is stretched into a relational realm, not of individualized things, but of feelings, “the rise of an affective tone” that starts from the indeterminate relation between things, and not the things themselves. Here we are, *intermezzo* again!

Subjects and objects are not the main currency of a Process worldview. Relevance, or contextual relation, is. According to Butler, taking the betweenness of relations as primary eschews “the framework that presupposes that reality comes either from one pole or from the other . . . of subject and object.”⁹⁶ She continues, “Whitehead makes clear that the things that we might be tempted to comprehend as objects [or subjects] are, in fact, already established within a framework of relevance.”⁹⁷ Like Calarco’s proto-ontological plane, an indeterminate framework of relevance is the primary focus of a Process worldview, as the very condition for anything we might call subjects and objects. In fact, Butler begins to deduce from Whitehead’s scheme that the relation itself is what dictates what becomes subject and what becomes object in each intra-action. Objects are not merely things to perceive, but provocations in themselves within a plane of relationality. Objects, “impinge upon us as subjects, and ask something of us,” she writes, and “if this were not occurring, we could not be subjects at all. Neither would there be objects.”⁹⁸ She continues:

⁹⁶ Butler, “On This Occasion,” 5.

⁹⁷ Butler, “On This Occasion,” 5

⁹⁸ Butler, “On This Occasion,” 7.

An object cannot provoke all on its own; there is no fully self-generated emanation coming from the being of the object; on the contrary, it has to act on the subject, [or] 'in' the subject to qualify as an object at all . . . Anything can qualify as an object if it provokes a special activity within a subject. Anything can be a subject if it becomes an occasion for a special activity in relation to an object.⁹⁹

Anything can be an object or subject, she says. It all depends on the mode of activity between the provocation and that which is provoked. And as any child knows from the grade school playground, "provocations are wagers, and there is not guarantee that they will work."¹⁰⁰ When we provoke another, we cannot be assured how they will respond, or even if they will respond, but our provocation exists for them and their reply or lack thereof determines our state. Provocation is not the same as a cause, but more of an invitation or a spark. As Butler tentatively speculates, such provocations "seem to constitute a kind of agency that is in no way restricted to the human."¹⁰¹ Rather, she asserts, "It is as if everything living has tentacles of one kind or another and these prehensive (feeling) activities are part of the organism, not something added on, and certainly not something inessential."¹⁰² She continues:

They are aspects of the organism, but they are also modes of relationality, open-ended, not fully knowing, bound to the world, seeking to further existence on yet one more occasion. They may not don spectacles and hunch over a book, but they are nevertheless engaged in exploratory functions that are like our own . . . [insofar as] the object's provoking [and] the subject's activity take place at once, and what will serve as the object, and what as the subject, is clearly changeable [since] forms of activity and agency are to be found on all sides . . . [W]hat acts is not necessarily a subject, since the subject itself acts only when acted upon from elsewhere. And being acted on, being provoked, does not have to be by another organism; it can also come from one's own history, or the history of organisms.¹⁰³

Suddenly we see Butler moving systematically, for the first time, towards a metaphysical theorization of indistinction at a proto-ontological level. Not only is she extending consideration to a broader ontological field of living creatures, but also to the nonliving provocations of memory and idea that are essential to the development of

⁹⁹ Butler, "On This Occasion," 7.

¹⁰⁰ Butler, "On This Occasion," 8.

¹⁰¹ Butler, "On This Occasion," 8.

¹⁰² Butler, "On This Occasion," 9.

¹⁰³ Butler, "On This Occasion," 9-10.

creative life. We can be provoked by what Whitehead calls the “the real agency of the actual past.”¹⁰⁴ Experience is shot through with provocations from the past, from the present, and perhaps even from a potential future—the real and ideal colliding again. Personal politics and ethics are haunted by an insistent buzz from these provocations that most often exist beyond the personal/political register of recognition or mourning. Creaturely cosmologies exhort us to look beyond the visible frames of human, or even animal—of identity and difference—toward zones of indistinction where indeterminate and ambiguous relationality insists. An un-domesticated engagement with these modes of existence—whether it is deemed “religious” or “mystical”—need not fracture these relations along Enlightenment lines, but can attend to their complexities with a “heart on fire” for all creaturely existents.

An adequate metaphysics of experiential becoming makes us temper any personal and political formulations with the ongoing theorization of a proto-ontological plane that does not take the human or animal as its starting point. Nor does feeling—or “affective tone”—require full cognition. As Butler states, “Apprehension is prior to recognition, and it constitutes a kind of prior relation against which the norms of recognition can be tested.”¹⁰⁵ Butler advocates circumventing norms of recognition in favor of “more general conditions that prepare or shape a subject *for* recognition,” a statement that lends itself toward a metaphysical reading of a proto-ontological plane.¹⁰⁶

But the best part is yet to come. “If one were to rethink performativity within these terms,” writes Butler, “it would be important to try to understand this strange way we are acted on, solicited, brought out, provoked, and how what we call our acting or our doing is itself always in some ways a response to what precedes and enables our

¹⁰⁴ Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 210.

¹⁰⁵ Butler, “On This Occasion,” 15.

¹⁰⁶ Butler, “On This Occasion,” 15, my emphasis.

action.”¹⁰⁷ She leads us right to the necessity of a more adequate cosmology, a proto-ontology—a religious move no longer limited to the construction of “religion.” Butler describes a proto-ontological framework of relevance that precedes and even enables our action, a move that presses beyond her own contemporary theorization which has heretofore been all too narrowly personal and political. “The performative theory of action,” she contends,

has to be resituated in a relational understanding of living organisms, human and nonhuman, to understand both what sustains life and what imperils it. As important as it is to ask, whose life qualifies as human life?, we have to also ask the inverse question: what of human life is invariably nonhuman? So the quandary that lies before me is: how do we work in both directions at once?”¹⁰⁸

This project is aimed at working in two directions at once, and to push those directions beyond merely a question of human or nonhuman to a relational middle of indistinction that is much more indeterminate and open, leaving us more room to theorize the conceptual revolutions demanded by the current zeitgeist.

CAS is an inspiring example of unifying personal and political theory and action. What is lacking is a metaphysics of experiential becoming. CAS needs creaturely cosmologies strange and impersonal enough to account for the *how* of creative intra-action in the universe. The impersonal processes of provocation and response are excluded from classical political theory and social ontologies, but yet they ignite, inform, and prompt creativities toward new possibilities of inclusion and excess. Holding the personal and impersonal—the individual and the relational, or the real and ideal—together as a mutually immanent yin and yang will make both more complicated. Tuning into the affective tones that arise from these strange provocations will help us approach the world more carefully—not laying our humanist frames of value and meaning too quickly—and increase our awareness that meaningful action, while difficult, is all the more essential in an indeterminate world.

¹⁰⁷ Butler, “On This Occasion,” 16.

¹⁰⁸ Butler, “On This Occasion,” 16.

We are entangled with a multiplicity of creative experience, in which provocations spark new conceptions-appropriations-assimilations that are not only or even best understood through dominant human languages or anthropocentric institutions. Speculating at this proto-ontological level—with all the existing, ancient, and rehabilitated frameworks we can—indeed bears on how we approach the personal questions of eating well, and even more so, living well. It is not enough to argue on the existing political stage with the existing political terms. We must take a much stronger stance of behalf of a proto-ontological plane of fundamental relationality too long forgotten and excluded from our political calculations (and yet provoking us still). We must fearlessly explore new frameworks of relevance in order to spark needed reflections on how we get on in this world with one another, with the so-called “animals,” and with a widening and multiple creaturely Real that provokes us toward new Ideals of action and participation.

5. Receiving the Strangest

This project is not an attempt to rewrite economic policy, trade agreements, or international politics though I do believe the creaturely cosmologies I describe here can assist in precisely this kind of revisioning.¹⁰⁹ As Best and Anthony Nocella point out, a reoriented critical animal theory cannot function as a specialized movement only directed at animals, but must integrate voices from multiple justice-oriented movements into a “new revolutionary force” that builds upon, “the achievements of classical democratic, libertarian socialist, and anarchist traditions” and incorporates “radical green, critical

¹⁰⁹ Reimagining economic policies and practices that include creaturely life is an essential aspect of total liberation. It is beyond the scope of the project here, but as described in the footnote on p. 28, the Austrian school of economics (F. A. Hayek and Joseph Schumpeter) leaves the most room to imagine new modes of voluntary exchange. Although historically limited to a distinctly anthropocentric register, new de/re/constructive work could be done on this front to extend the frameworks and methodologies beyond the human to rethink voluntarism and free exchange on a ecological and creaturely level.

race, feminist, and indigenous struggles” that synthesize “Earth, animal, and human liberation standpoints and politics.”¹¹⁰ They continue:

It must reach out to radical academics, political prisoners, exploited workers, indigenous peoples, subsistence farmers, tribes pushed to the brink of extinction, guerrilla armies, armed insurgents, disenfranchised youth, and to everyone who struggles against the advancing juggernaut of global capitalism, neo-fascism, imperialism, militarism, and phony wars on terrorism that front attacks on dissent and democracy.¹¹¹

Alongside this fervent call to reach toward unexpected partnerships, I argue that whatever revisions are co-imagined must be based on an adequate metaphysics, not just of human and animal bodies, but of all creaturely becomings that we are entangled with as, according to Acampora, “fellow inhabitants of the world.”¹¹² Acampora’s notion of “neighborliness”¹¹³ must be stretched to the brink of logic, into a proto-ontological realm that is populated more with strangers than neighbors. We must go beyond even Acampora’s idea of “interspecies conviviality” to the act of “symphysis,”¹¹⁴ physical sympathy—we might call it a Whiteheadian “affective tone”—that we feel with other becoming life even if we do not have the categories to think about them. Such a feeling originates from the relational middle, from zones of indistinction, always *intermezzo*.

Approaching this strange betweenness reminds us that not all life exists in our neighborhood, or even in our imaginations, and it is here that we must consider how to conceive, advocate for, and welcome the stranger who presently exists only in our

¹¹⁰ Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella II, “Revolutionary Environmentalism: An Emerging New Struggle for Total Liberation” Dr. Steven Best, <http://www.drstevebest.org/RevolutionaryEnvironmentalism.htm> (accessed September 1, 2012).

¹¹¹ Best and Nocella, “Revolutionary Environmentalism” (blog).

¹¹² Acampora, *Corporal Compassion*, 87.

¹¹³ Acampora, *Corporal Compassion*, 87.

¹¹⁴ Acampora, *Corporal Compassion*, 23.

“virtual community,” a non-local concept whose relational edges aren’t fully known.¹¹⁵

Engagements with this virtuality provoke us into new modes of response not unlike ALF’s vision for a more harmonious future between people, the earth, and animals. But are we even ready for our hearts to catch fire with this level of creaturely reality? Do we truly want to embark on a risky and vulnerable venture into the virtual fringes of existence, into the strange proto-ontological that exceeds our current calculations? Performative action is no longer limited to the safe confines of the humanist stage. Rather, it becomes an imaginative play between what we feel and perceive now and what we might yet perceive, or feel, in the future, the dual-movement of our own creaturely becoming that is both real and ideal, familiar and deeply strange, one and many simultaneously, a gradual expansion of our personal identity to include a more diffracted and impersonal scope.

In a universe of active provocations, the burden of action does not fall to us alone, which should give us both pause and comfort. We exist in a realm of innumerable provocations that is truly strange and indistinct. In fact, the notion of indistinction itself locates us squarely between the oppositionary binaries of sameness and difference. But as yet, indistinction only serves to reject the binary in a negative form insofar as it is not sameness and not difference. But in order to begin theorizing the productive power of this third option, we must look to metaphysical systems that can *positively affirm* the complicated, lively, chaotic multiplicity that results when the binary is leveled. As soon as we opt for a non-hierarchical path between sameness and difference, we are plunged straight into a multiplicity that is simultaneously strange and impersonal, and yet also the very condition for revisioning modes of kinship and personal life. Receiving this

¹¹⁵ Acampora, *Corporal Compassion*, 92.

strangeness into our own physical and conceptual becoming presses beyond traditional notions of ethics, morality, and axiological studies of value toward a fundamentally perceptive act of tying our self-determination into relations of co-feeling, indeed *compassion*, that are as much virtual as they are material, ideal as they are real, mystical as they are secular.

In the next chapters, I will show how this co-feeling is a mode of deep empiricism no longer limited to a narrow swath of five human senses. By challenging Enlightenment oppositions that currently render metaphysics as the irrational antithesis of pure and rational philosophy, CAS not only exposes another level of binary violence but also reverses the marginalization of creaturely cosmologies that can inspire new streams of public discourse and contestations of power. Opposition and isolation gives way to provocative linkages—to *practices* of widening our empirical, and experiential perceptions to creatively include physically or conceptually excluded others.

Our personal decisions play out in (even dissonant) concert within a multiplicity of provocative intra-actions and excessive bonds that are deeply strange and impersonal, and for which we have little language to theorize or inspiration to perceive. Creaturely cosmologies urge us, not only to recognize these zones of indistinction, but press us toward positive theorizations and perceptive practices amid the multiplicity of abundant relations, and away from myths of scarcity restrained by stagnant language, intellectual deception, or our dominant senses. The within and between of this lively multiplicity shrugs off every attempt to lay our simple unifications upon life and demands a deeper account of reality that we often already intuit—and which slippery empiricisms like quantum physics attest to—but still set aside as a hunch or feeling. This world is more than it appears. Its unification—as our own—is an incredible aggregate of processes, innumerable acts of becoming through which every creature territorializes its singular

reality with others, subversive of every reduction and simplification, provoking and waiting for provocation. We have much to explore within these interstices, and in embarking on the adventure, much to offer.

Chapter Three

Subversive Democracies: The Strange Creatures of Process Thought

We find ourselves in a buzzing world, amid a democracy of fellow creatures; whereas, under some disguise or other, orthodox philosophy can only introduce us to solitary substances, each enjoying an illusory experience.

- Alfred North Whitehead

The crux of philosophy is to retain the balance between individuality of existence and relativity of existence.

- Alfred North Whitehead

The Process Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead is also a stranger in our midst.

In spite of its impact and application across a number of disciplines—from education, law, and physics to architecture, economics, and agriculture—Whitehead’s Process thought is still relatively marginalized in philosophy and theology departments. It is often other contemporary philosophers who bring the lesser-known metaphysician to the fore. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, it was Bruno Latour’s description of Whitehead as the most important metaphysician of the twentieth-century that caught Butler’s attention and provoked her re-engagement with a philosopher she had only briefly studied in college.

In fact, several theorists directly or indirectly linked to contemporary Critical Animal Studies have developed their work in dialog with Process thought. Donna Haraway, for example, is deeply informed by Whitehead, and as I will argue in Chapter Five, understanding the central concept of Whitehead’s “actual occasion” is essential to a correct reading of Haraway’s controversial *When Species Meet*.

Gilles Deleuze, whose concept of “becoming animal” and non-anthropocentric

ontology provoke productive collisions among animal theorists,¹ called Whitehead's landmark text *Process and Reality* "one of the greatest books of modern philosophy."² In a chapter of *The Fold*, Deleuze also credits Whitehead with asking the essential question "What is an Event?," a nonconformist inquiry that guided nearly all of Deleuze's work. Through Whitehead, the *becoming* of events was the anarchic replacement for the stasis of *being* in Deleuze's rhizomatic speculations. As Steven Shaviro points out, for Whitehead, and Deleuze after him, "The world . . . is made of events, and nothing but events: happenings rather than things, verbs rather than nouns, processes rather than substances."³ Both an oak tree and our thoughts about it are events that must be explainable by the same speculative framework, which Whitehead argued was best conceived as a process.

1. Subversive Affirmations of a Panexperiential Universe

It might seem peculiar to paint this rather bookish English mathematician with the grizzled edges of an anarchist. After all, Whitehead was most comfortable in the armchair attire of the academy. With Bertrand Russell, Whitehead co-authored the immense *Principia Mathematica*, before being invited to Harvard at the age of 62 to lecture on philosophy and metaphysics. Hardly the breeding ground for subversion.

¹ Lori Brown, "Becoming-Animal in the Flesh: Expanding the Ethical Reach of Deleuze and Guattari's Tenth Plateau," *PhaenEx* 2, no. 2 (2007): 260-278; Alain Beaulieu, "The Status of Animality in Deleuze's Thought," *Journal for the Critical Animal Studies* 9, issue 1/2 (2011): 69-88; Leonard Lawlor, "Following the Rats: Becoming-Animal in Deleuze and Guattari," *SubStance* 37, no. 3, issue 117 (2008): 169-87.

² Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (1968; repr., New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 285.

³ Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 17.

But Whitehead's love of logic gave way to a more generalizeable exploration of philosophy concerned mainly with liberating life and concepts from stagnant paradigms. To put it another way, Whitehead was in search of knowledge regimes—or epistemologies—flexible enough to adapt to the dynamism of life-as-process, and broad enough to explain diverse types of experiential becoming in a meta-system that could speak to mathematics as well as biology, emotions as well as empiricism, human experience as well as the experience of so-called “nature” and the “nonhuman.” “Speculative philosophy,” wrote Whitehead, “is the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which *every* element of our experience can be interpreted.”⁴

This panexperiential move set Whitehead apart from traditional philosophical models. In fact, Deleuze described Whitehead as the successor of a somewhat “secret society” of a very short line of philosophers concerned with the passage of nature and what conditions make any event—be it physical or conceptual, human or non—possible in the midst of a chaotic multiplicity.⁵ In other words, *how* and *why* does a distinct one emerge from the many as both related yet unique? How and why does *this* (and every) creature or idea differentiate itself from its past and surroundings rather than just repeat or mirror them?

As Deleuze makes clear, there is never pure repetition in the universe, but only

⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Gifford Lectures, 1927-28, corr. ed., ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 3, my emphasis; hereafter PR.

⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: Minnesota University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 76. On the same page, Deleuze calls Whitehead “the last great Anglo-American philosopher before Wittgenstein's disciples spread their misty confusion, sufficiency, and terror.”

repetition with a twist, a “neoevolution” from amid the myriad influences of past and present toward new conceptual actualizations.⁶ The adage attributed to the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, that “you never step in the same river twice,” is extended in Whitehead. “No thinker thinks twice . . .” he writes, “no subject experiences twice” (PR 29). The process of creative novelty makes experiential becoming anything but stagnant. “The secrecy” of this dynamic process approach, explains Belgian chemist Isabelle Stengers, “derives from the legacy of [Whitehead], who, discretely and without polemics, without ever asking his readers to thrill to the audacity and radicalism of the risk or to the threat of isolation, but with an obstinate tenderness, undertook to forge a conceptual language that forces those who acquire a taste for it to think.”⁷ At the heart of his metaphysics is the drive toward the “free and wild creation of concepts”⁸ flexible enough to bend with diverse types of experience and bold enough to inspire new modes of strange and widening perception.

Panexperientialism affirms all manner of experience whether or not it is classically “human” or conscious. “Nothing can be omitted . . .” from this system of thought, asserts Whitehead,

experience drunk and experience sober, experience sleeping and experience waking, experience drowsy and experience wide-awake, experience self-conscious and experience self-forgetful, experience intellectual and experience physical, experience anxious and experience care-free, experience anticipatory and experience retrospective, experience happy and experience grieving, experience in the light and experience in the dark, experience normal and

⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota), 238.

⁷ Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 6.

⁸ Subtitle to Stengers' *Thinking with Whitehead*.

experience abnormal.”⁹

Every kind of experience must be explainable by the same framework of how or why—a Deleuzian *univocity* or de Landa’s *flat ontology*—that finds some unifying lens through which to approach a panexperiential universe. Whitehead sought, as it were, to free life and thought from fixed concepts that would keep it caged, which is indeed a very subversive move.

2. Beyond the Bifurcation of Nature

Whitehead rejected both splits of realism and idealism mentioned in Chapter One. As I will show later, his affirmation of a panexperiential universe made every process a unification of real data and ideal potential, leveling the immaterial or transcendent into a mutuality. But he also resisted the tendency of classical philosophy to split nature from mentality, or as he put it, to “bifurcate nature into two divisions . . . namely into the nature apprehended in awareness and the nature which is the cause of awareness,”¹⁰ or as Nietzsche says, “to divide the world into a ‘real’ and an ‘apparent’ world . . . in the manner of Christianity or in the manner of Kant . . .”¹¹ But what does he mean by this?

As described in the first chapter, philosophical realism and idealism depend upon this split between the perceiving mind and the objects perceived. Philosophical idealists claim that the universe is dependent on conscious perceptions and mental categories for its form and value. Realists posit a world independent of human thought, observation, and action. Whitehead resisted these divisions.

⁹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (1933; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1967), 226; hereafter AI.

¹⁰ Alfred North Whitehead, *Concept of Nature* (1920; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30-31; hereafter CN.

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (1889; New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 49.

Perhaps it does not sound too radical to conceive of both things and our perceptions of them as explainable by the same means, namely that of process. But this was a significant departure from the mainstream, be it Kant's rationalism—in the form of transcendental idealism—that posited a fixed subject and innate categories of thought independent from experience, or Locke's empiricism, in which all knowledge is received by sense impressions on the blank slate, or "tabula rasa," of the mind, and without which it could generate no idea.

For Whitehead, the "nature" that *we are aware of* is a real, but only partial perception, expressed as "the greenness of the trees, the song of the bird, the warmth of the sun, the hardness of the chairs, and the feel of the velvet" (CN 31). But the nature that causes that awareness typically escapes our senses, for example, "the conjectured system of molecules and electrons . . ." (CN 31). We do not experience the subtlety of these particles that enable our sense of sight or hearing, but neither can we deny that it "so affects the mind as to produce the awareness of apparent nature" (CN 31).

A bifurcated nature leaves us with certain perceptions of the world around us and only a rough conjecture of the way that particles, vibrations, or relations affect our senses and mind to create that perception. By this view, the greenness we experience is not real in its own right, it is just *apparently* green because of the way our mind is being affected by particles of transmission. The mind becomes central in a bifurcated world since the rest of nature is reduced either to its apparent qualities (i.e., qualities apparent to the mind) or to the particles that affect the mind to produce a perception of that appearance.

This phenomenon is understandable. If we are sitting around a blazing campfire, we know that there are agitated electrons and carbon and oxygen molecules interacting in

those flames, but we do not experience them. What we experience is their effect—the warmth of the fire or the red-orange glow. This division seems like common sense, but it is precisely the bifurcation that Whitehead is fighting against. “Unless we produce the all-embracing relations, we are faced with a bifurcated nature; namely, warmth and redness on one side, and molecules, electrons and ether on the other side” (CN 32). Whitehead’s aim was to find some unity between these two sides. Otherwise we are left with a fragmented world that splits matter from mind, real from ideal. Bifurcation leaves us with three choices: to reduce the world only to our illusory perceptions or ideas of it, to dismiss the phenomenon of subtle particles like electrons and molecules as purely logical terms that are not “real” but only help us calculate apparent nature, or to define the world only in its real/material aspects while denigrating the so-called “psychic additions” of color, warmth, and sound through which we perceive our surroundings (CN 29). Each of these options is empirically inadequate and yet, according to Whitehead, this bifurcation of nature “is always creeping back into scientific philosophy” (CN 32). Holding perception and the causality of that perception together in the same explanatory framework is extremely difficult.

Whitehead’s point was not to collapse the world and our perceptions about it into one and the same thing. On the contrary, he was pressing for a deeper understanding of both things and thought—and showing how both were explainable as related events, or processes of becoming that could not be separated. “Natural philosophy,” writes Whitehead, “should never ask, what is in the mind and what is in nature. To do so is a confession that it has failed to express relations between things perceptively known” (CN 30).

After moving to Harvard, Whitehead began working out his speculative framework in earnest, producing a number of books aimed at rethinking the principles of natural knowledge such as *Religion in the Making*, *Science and the Modern World*, and his landmark *Process and Reality*, followed by *Adventures of Ideas*, and *Modes of Thought*, among others. None of these books are especially easy to read, full as they are with a new vocabulary for approaching life that is not based on terms derived from the familiar humanist hierarchies and anthropocentric institutions. “If Whitehead’s work is hard to approach,” cautions Stengers, “it is because it demands . . . that its readers accept the adventure of the questions that will separate them from every consensus.”¹² To think of life-as-process or event remains a nonconformist position essential for liberation philosophies.

Whitehead’s aim was to explain life in all its manifestations, not to bifurcate it into two halves of reality. This risky proposition required what Roland Faber calls, “the search for programmatic dysfunction that liberates multiplicity” from every structure that suppresses its creative play and potential.¹³ Whitehead removes the guardrails of philosophical—and even traditional ethical and moral—thought, leaving his readers without a new stability to cling to other than the creative advance of life itself, and the unforeseen, dangerous, even dysfunctional adventures of engaging or defending “unconquerable multiplicities in becoming,” a subversive affirmation of every kind of experience.¹⁴ To take seriously the experiential becoming of both the perceiving world

¹² Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 7.

¹³ Roland Faber, “‘O Bitches of Impossibility!’ Programmatic Dysfunction in the Chaosmos of Deleuze and Whitehead, Deleuze, in *Whitehead, Bergson: Rhizomatic Connections*, ed. Keith Robinson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 202.

¹⁴ Faber, “O Bitches of Impossibility!,” 202.

and our perceptions of it takes us straight to Calarco's proto-ontological plane—or Deleuze and Pick's *non-philosophical*,¹⁵ the Deleuzian *monstrosity*,¹⁶ Butler's *frameworks of relevance*, Whitehead's "buzzing" democracy of fellow creatures, a living multiplicity *insisting* from within. To heed the demand is to step right into the middle of the plane, ready to embark on the adventure.

3. The Basics of Process

Affirming a panexperiential world and resisting the bifurcation of nature into things and our thoughts about them are two sides of the same coin of experiential becoming. For Whitehead, experience was the purview of all life and was nothing more or less than explaining how and why every aspect of the universe was both related and unique, how the world seemed to simultaneously persist even as it was obviously changing. Following Heraclitus's emphasis of change and Plato's insistence on a persistent character or unity, Whitehead unified these opposites in his explanation of how experience is transmitted in space and time. In *Process*, every slice of space-time is an instant of creativity that Whitehead called an "actual occasion."

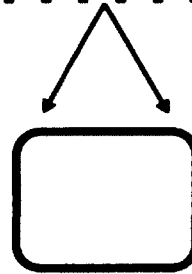
¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 218.

¹⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (1968; repr., New York: Columbia University Press), 29.

Whitehead took the continuity of space and time . . .

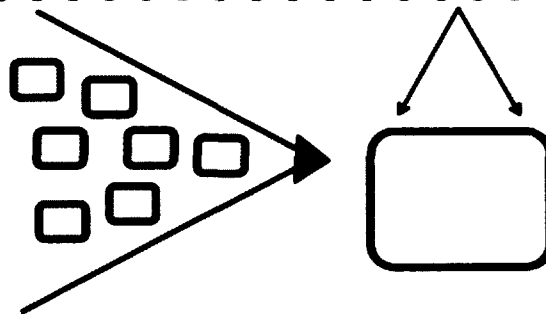


. . . and broke it into discreet entities called "actual occasions."



one "actual occasion"

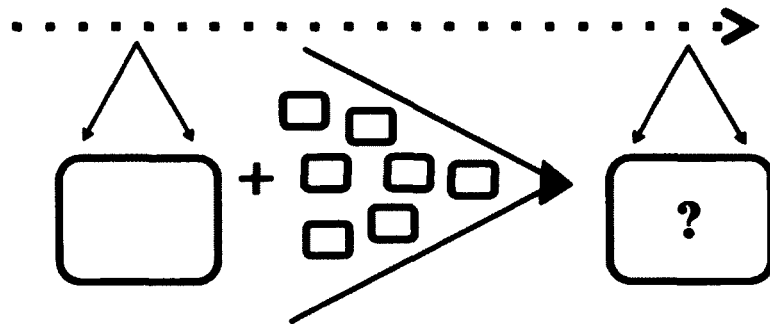
Every "actual occasion" is a process where past occasions come together to become a new self-constructing occasion. This is what Whitehead meant when he said, "The many become one, and are increased by that one" (PR 21).



many occasions into one new occasion

After the occasion becomes, or self-constructs, out of the past data, it becomes data for future occasions. Each occasion becomes one historical entity

among others that influence the open future.



The basics of Process—and the actual occasion—are a bit like a movie reel. Each scene, or actual occasion, is an event that brings something new. Every scene is an experiential becoming marked by the “production of novelty” or a new form of “concrete togetherness” (PR 21). Whitehead calls this togetherness *concrescence*, whereby, as Shaviro explains, “[s]omething new has been added to the universe . . .” (PR 21), in “a single incident of becoming.”¹⁷ Reality has been bundled together in a new way, a unique un/re/folding of inherited data in a new scene.

If Whitehead himself is unfamiliar to most, then the actual occasion is even stranger. Whitehead based his entire metaphysics on the experience of the most impersonal and strange slice of time, the actual occasion, which remains Whitehead’s most radical contribution to western thought. Everything in existence had to be explained in terms of actual occasions, the final facts of creativity. Whitehead called these non-linear instants, “creatures,” in which past data and future potentiality become fact.

¹⁷ Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 18

Essentialized distinctions between mind and matter, subject and object, living and nonliving were obliterated since the actual occasion, although decidedly not “human,” had a degree of physicality and mentality, a creatureliness that I will explain shortly.

Actual occasions are the heart of Whitehead’s “ontological principle” as “the only reasons” (PR 24). As Whitehead asserts, “the search for a reason is always the search for an actual fact which is the vehicle of that reason” (PR 40). Like John Dewey’s “live creature,” for whom experience is always an artistic unification of the past and future in the present moment, Whitehead’s actual occasion constructs itself between two poles: one physical and one mental. These two poles—*physical* perception of provocative data (Whitehead called it *prehension*) and the *mental* grasping toward a possible future—define an act of experience. As Whitehead writes, “Each actuality is essentially bipolar, physical and mental, and the physical inheritance is essentially accompanied by a conceptual reaction partly conformed to it, and partly introductory of a relevant novel contrast, but always introducing emphasis, valuation, and purpose” (PR 108). This purpose or valuation might not look at all familiar to us, which is all the more reason why attending to it can increase our own understanding of the proto-ontological plane and thus of creaturely life.

3.1. Process and pragmatism: redefining the live creature

Since I mentioned Dewey, I will add here that some philosophers have placed Whitehead in the stream of American pragmatism, though perhaps the periphery, along with the likes of Dewey, Charles Pierce and William James. Although it is difficult to note specific ties between these thinkers, Whitehead affirms and critiques aspects of pragmatism through the theorizing of his own rather counterintuitive pragmatic

metaphysics.¹⁸ It is counterintuitive because pragmatism was opposed to universalism and was characterized by a marked rejection of any orthodox metaphysical suppositions. Pragmatism asserts that life develops according to what works, not according to imposed structures. And likewise, what works also changes depending on the circumstance. A pragmatic view thus requires constantly shifting truths and knowledge that account for nature, culture, and bodies undergoing continuous change.

For as much as he shared the pragmatic assessment of dead knowledge, or what he called “inert ideas,” Whitehead disagreed with his contemporaries that metaphysics as such was the problem.¹⁹ Rather it was a certain *kind* of metaphysics that posited mechanistic bodies and correspondingly stagnant concepts.

If Dewey’s *live creature* designated a “complete interpenetration of the self and the world of objects and events,”²⁰ for the sake of educational reform that matched the dynamic development of bodies, Whitehead’s actual occasion pushed this to a much more general level. Actual occasions, and not just learning humans, are living coordinations of the past into a creative present, or “the creative advance from creature to creature, each creature including in itself the whole of history and exemplifying the self-identity of things and their mutual diversities” (PR 228). As Shaviro explains, “Whitehead uses the term *prehension* for the act by which one actual occasion takes up

¹⁸ See, for example, Dennis Sölch, “From Consistency to Coherence: Whitehead’s Transformation of James’ Epistemic Conservatism,” *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2011): 86-100.

¹⁹ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (1929; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1967), 1.

²⁰ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934; repr., New York: Perigree Books, 1980), 19.

and responds to another”—a creature prehending its past and surroundings.²¹ Human senses are indeed one means of prehension but certainly not the only one. Granted, I walk to town by visually reading signs, avoiding the tracks when I hear the train whistle, feeling the sidewalk beneath my feet. I navigate toward dinner by smelling the simmering curry and I taste the subtle spices that give it heat and intensity. But my existence is also filled with what Whitehead calls “non-sensuous perception” (AI 181). Consider for example, your perception of the past, not of the distant past, but the immediate past that “is constituted by that occasion, or by that group of fused occasions, which enters into experience devoid of any perceptible medium intervening between it and the present immediate fact” (AI 181). That past moment “is gone, and yet it is here . . . the foundation of our present existence . . .” (AI 181). We do not perceive the passing of that instant even as our present is “constituted by the influx of *the other* into that self-identity which is the continued life of the immediate past within the immediacy of the present” (181). Equally, writes Shaviro, “the earth prehends the sun that gives it energy; the stone prehends the earth to which it falls . . . a new entity comes into being by prehending other entities; every event *is* the prehension of other events.”²² Prehension is a universal mode of feeling for particles, plants, as well as insects, birds, pigs, and people.

On the other hand, mentality is not limited to “rational” thought alone. As Whitehead makes clear, “consciousness presupposes experience, and not experience consciousness” (PR 53). Further, “mental operations do not necessarily involve consciousness” (PR 85). Mentality or sentience may be discussed in terms of degree or intensity, but “the ‘mental pole’ of an occasion contributing to the existence of a tree or a

²¹ Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 28.

²² Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 29.

rock or an electron is never entirely absent . . . ”²³ With this understanding of physical prehension and mental grasping, Whitehead “radically deanthropomorphizes” the terms of the actual occasion by insisting on the perceptive and creative becoming at the heart of each processive creature, by which he means each actual occasion.²⁴

Whitehead’s “creatures” then are not the animals we think of in cages. Yet these fundamental processes of dynamic, irreverent life are equally in need of liberation. Creatures-as-actual occasions are the concrete manifestation of abstract possibilities—the incarnations that are produced and productive at the intersection between what has been and what might be. Per Whitehead, “A new creation has to arise from the actual world as much as from pure potentiality” (PR 80). What we consider matter is as much material as it is immaterial, actual and virtual, concrete and pure potential. He continues, “It also adds to the universe” (PR 80). These creatures are the final facts and basic events whose creative transmission makes up the world weprehend, whether we are aware of it or not. “[T]here is nothing which floats into the world from nowhere,” asserts Whitehead (PR 244). On the contrary, “Everything in the actual world is referable to some actual entity,” some actual creature in creative process (PR 244).

3.2. Process and physics: world-shaping through the “agential cut”

Karen Barad’s work in theoretical physics is especially useful here as we try to consider the creaturliness of the actual occasion. Though she does not explicitly draw from Whitehead, her account of a quantum as the minimum amount of any physical entity involved in an intra-action closely parallels Whitehead’s notion of the actual occasion. Much as the occasion “decides” itself from its inherited past and present

²³ Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 28.

²⁴ Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 28.

influences in an act of self-construction to become a singular event in all the universe, Barad describes the “agential cut” of a quantum, by which “intra-actions enact *agential separability*—the condition of *exteriority-within-phenomena*.”²⁵ All this means is that a quantum differentiates, or exteriorizes, itself from within other interior relations. To put it quite crudely, it is a bit like making the most of the hand you were dealt this morning. The version of “you” that rolled out of bed arose as a self-constructing event between a multiplicity of mental, physical, historical, and circumstantial relations, and what might be possible for the day. “You” are the becoming event—or the coordination of these relations between what is and what might be. The ongoing event of “you” changes throughout the day, deeply entangled with and responding to internal vascillations or external happenings. “You” cannot be separate from that matrix, but nor are “you” exactly a reproduction of them. Per Whitehead,

the present event while claiming self-identity, while sharing the very nature of the bygone occasion in all its living activities, nevertheless is engaged in modifying it, in adjusting it to *other* influences, in completing it with *other* values, in deflecting it to *other* purposes (AI 181).

The same is true for all occasions. Each of these events is nothing but an ongoing coordination and modification of the relational multiplicities with which they are entangled.

As Barad is clear to point out, exteriority does not preexist relations, *intra-action* does. Intra-action are those entanglements mentioned earlier, contrasted with the typical *interaction* that “presumes the prior existence of independent entities . . .”²⁶ that can then bump into each other. It is not that pre-existing agents undergo a becoming. Rather, the

²⁵ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 140, author’s emphasis.

²⁶ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 139.

becoming *is* the agent. Much as Butler describes relevance as the condition for recognition in Chapter Two, Barad's intra-action similarly "provides an alternative ontological condition" that precedes designations of subject or object.²⁷ The result of this is that there is no subject or object that then engage. Rather, from the perspective of physics, intra-acting relations, or relevance, are presupposed by any individuated exteriority.

Likewise, from the perspective of Process, "the subject-object called nature" must be considered in "its activity of self-constructing" (CN 47). The becoming creature is the self-constructing creature that inherits and modifies with other influences and ends. Like the agential cut, the becoming of each actual occasion is a final fact, an absolutely unique coordination of received relations at its most basic level of existence. "Each instant is irrevocable," writes Whitehead (CN 35). The agential cut happened and is absolutely unique. ". . . [A]n actual state of all nature can never return," asserts Whitehead, ". . . down to the smallest particle . . . the instants of time which have passed, are passed, and can never be again" (CN 35). The universe unfolds with each unique, becoming occasion.

On this note, I would like to highlight a tension that pervades this project—the focus both on the singular agent described by Barad's "agential cut," Whitehead's actual occasion, and (as discussed in the next chapter) the Jain *jīva*, as well as the relational intra-action that the agent enacts. One might ask if I locate myself more with the individual or more with the intra-active relationships that are the condition for identity. The key aspect of these creaturely cosmologies of becoming is that the relational and individual cannot be separated. There is never a time in which the frameworks of

²⁷ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 140.

relevance overshadow the singularity of each cut, occasion, or *jīva*. On the contrary, the singularity of creaturely life demonstrates the twist of self-construction and world-shaping that each distinct entity makes of its inherited map of relations. Every becoming enacts this singular cut by perceiving numerous other relevant singular cuts and flows with which they are entangled. Relational systems are nothing but matrices of unrepeatable singularities territorializing a plane.

In order to extend self-constructing agency to the level of quantum — much as Whitehead does in deanthropomorphizing the actual occasion — Barad actually draws upon Butler’s performative theory to do what Butler herself only gestures toward in her 2009 engagement with Whitehead discussed earlier. Barad’s agential realist ontology offers a “posthumanist performative account of material bodies (both human and nonhuman)” that actually delineate the edges and borders of the universe.²⁸ She describes it as “a relationality between specific material (re)configurings of the world through which boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially *enacted*.”²⁹

In case the radicality of her statement got lost in the verbiage, Barad is saying nothing less than that the intra-action of entangled agencies, through the coordinating and modifying agential cut, “enacts a causal structure.”³⁰ Put otherwise, the agential separation of becoming, “does not take place in space and time but happens *in the making of spacetime itself*.”³¹ Suddenly the agential cuts themselves are the causal builders of the structures of space and time.

²⁸ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 139.

²⁹ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 139, my emphasis.

³⁰ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 140.

³¹ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 140, my emphasis.

The boundaries of life, space, time, or individuality by which “part of the world makes itself differentially intelligible to another part of the world” are created by phenomena that are not creatures in any familiar sense, but rather what Barad describes as “differential patterns of mattering . . . specific material (re)configurations of the world . . . which need not involve humans.”³² Indeed, as Barad asserts, “it is through such practices that the differentiated boundaries between humans and nonhumans, culture and nature, science and the social, are constituted.”³³ To put it most succinctly, Barad is proposing something that holds for creatures as well as occasions that no longer just live and move *in* a preexistent world. Rather, in our becomings, we (re)configure the contours of separation and individuation. As Barad clarifies, “Difference patterns do not merely change in time and space; spacetime is an enactment of difference, a way of making/marking here and now.”³⁴ Becoming is an event of time and identity, but also of territorializing. As Whitehead says of the actual occasion, “it is where it is and what it is,” as “the enjoyment of a certain quantum of physical time” (PR 283). As a decision, the actual occasion distinguishes itself from the matrix of relations by coordinating those elements in a certain way, marking a boundary between and the matrix and its expression of them. To be “actual” is to be a receptive *and* creative event, produced and productive, not just of a “self” but causal of structures—not the result of them. *A creature creating.*

Empiricism alone is inadequate to consider this becoming creature, since according to Whitehead, “in all [the empiricist’s] explanations it is always *he himself* that

³² Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 140. A comparative analysis of Barad’s “differential patterns of mattering” and Christopher Alexander’s architectural “pattern language” might prove fruitful here but it is outside the scope of this project.

³³ Barad, *Meeting the Universe* 140.

³⁴ Barad, *Meeting the Universe* 137.

proves to be constructing nature It is no wonder, then, that his construction and that which was to be constructed so seldom coincide” (CN 47). An adequate philosophy, Whitehead insists, “raises nature to independence, and makes it construct itself . . . ,” not in a vacuum but in response to and participation with innumerable entanglements (CN 47). This assertion is nothing short of philosophical anarchy. In Whitehead’s reading, nature is not passive material to be extracted or exploited, but like Barad’s agential realism and its deciding cut, nature is raised to independence, constructing itself through the un/re/folding of the creative advance of actual occasions. If philosophy, science, and theology cannot adequately express or validate this phenomena—phenomena that construct the very passage of time and space their disciplines presume, not to mention co-create the conditions of our own bodily existence³⁵—what hope do we have for caring for the vulnerable bodies we see around us?

4. An Ethico-Politics of Experiential Becoming

The actual occasion gives us tremendous reason to hope that society is capable,

³⁵ Neuroscientist Georg Northoff demonstrates a compelling example of this. He and his team at the University of Ottawa have been conducting neuroimaging that suggests that what we think of as mind—especially the phenomenological experiences of space, time, qualia, or point of view typically taken as empirically given—cannot be reduced to the brain, but should instead be attributed to pre-subjective intrinsic interactions—a “hammock” he calls it—between brain and the environment. This is a remarkable hypothesis for two reasons. First, Northoff and his team are bringing philosophical speculation in dialog with physicalist concepts like the brain, that has been historically postulated as the physical structure that all behavior and perceptions can be reduced to. Second, this research posits a neurophenomenology that is *prior* to consciousness and more basic than neurocognitive skills of sensory and motor function. Northoff postulates that the spatial/temporal frame is not pre-given, but the outcome of prior processes, a brain-environment continuum that predicts the degree of possible consciousness and intensity of experience. See Georg Northoff, *Philosophy of the Brain* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2004), *Unlocking the Brain: Volume 1: Coding* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), and especially *Unlocking the Brain: Volume 2: Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

not only of changing, but of changing on a massive, comprehensive, and even ecological and technological scale. As we have seen, modification lies in the very self-constructive process of becoming that defines every experiential event no matter how impersonal or strange. In fact, by taking a risky step toward this strange proto-ontological plane of becoming we place ourselves in the buzzing middle “amid a democracy of fellow creatures,” who do not play by humanist rules, language, or frameworks of knowledge, but who are co-creating our world nonetheless (PR 50). The actual occasion, with its mentality and physicality, its unification of real and ideal, undermines the dominant philosophical approaches to mind and nature upon which most political and ethical discourses rest.

This does not mean that we cannot talk about political inclusion or ethical action. However, by extending our frameworks of knowledge toward all experiential becomings, we complicate any straightforward approach to moral action and political responsibility that depends on Law or Universal Values or by virtue of conscience. As Barad and Whitehead argue, agential creativity must be examined in terms of its particular de/re/territorialization—the way it responds to provocations and provokes other becomings in turn. So how do we approach this buzzing world?

4.1. Flat ontology or ethical hierarchy?

Contemporary philosophers of becoming have typically offered two approaches to ethico-political engagement. The first follows a flat ontology that levels the political and ethical playing field. [D]e Landa and other speculative realists, as well as object-oriented philosophers like Shaviro, err in this direction, meaning that they abstain from laying ethical obligations, morality, or notions of value onto the proto-ontological plane. As

Deleuze and Guattari claim, “There is not the slightest reason for thinking that modes of existence need transcendent values by which they could be compared, selected, and judged relative to one another. On the contrary, there are only immanent criteria.”³⁶

Quanta, for example, are not beholden to humanist ethical or political frameworks. The logic of a flat ontology suggests that we ought not use those frameworks to conceive of our relationships with this aspect of existence. On the contrary, the fact that the fundamental events of creative life are excluded from ethical and political frames requires us to rethink the dominant terms of our social contract in terms of networks rather than individuals or aesthetics rather than ethics, to give two examples. Of course the issue remains, that if everything is on the same playing field and if notions of individual responsibility and/or corporate morality no longer hold, how do we enact protections for vulnerable populations? How do we justify, much less mandate, ethical or political policies that honor or safeguard creaturely life?

The second option follows a hierarchical model in which there remain differences of degree among living entities, even though all events are of the same experiential, processive kind. In this perspective, ethics and politics remain necessary categories to guide human behavior toward safeguarding a living multiplicity. Even though, as Shavero claims, there is a degree of mentality, however slight, in occasions that contribute to a rock or a tree, Whitehead himself made a distinction between the intensity of that mentality. He describes the degrees of intensity as the actual occasion, the nexus, and the society. A group of occasions is called a nexus, meaning “a particular fact of togetherness among actual entities” (PR 20), somehow adhering to one another in the development of

³⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 74.

space and time.³⁷ Shaviro goes on, “When the elements of a nexus are united, not just by continuity, but also by a ‘defining characteristic’ that is common to all of them, and that they have all ‘inherited’ from one another, or acquired by a common process, then Whitehead calls it a ‘society.’”³⁸ A society is anything that is self-sustaining or enduring such as a plant, a person, or the Great Pyramid. It endures even as it changes.

In the case of a society, a certain order develops among a grouping of occasions that makes a nexus non-social in a sense, meaning that the majority of intra-actions happen within the society, deepening in overlap and intensity (PR 107). There are still relations with other provocations, but the society folds back on itself to a higher degree, reifying a depth of experience by excluding some intra-actions with other occasions. So how do we understand the degree of mentality in these various societies? I mean a tomato plant, the Great Pyramid, and my neighbor are still quite different, aren’t they?

At the level of the actual occasion mentality is easier to explain—as the self-constructive grasping toward a relevant future out of the given inheritance. Mentality exists within every occasion that makes up a nexus or society. Given this multiplicity of mentalities, Whitehead asserts, “There are thus millions and millions of centres of life in each animal body. So what needs to be explained is . . . unifying control, by reason of which we not only have unified behavior, which can be observed by others, but also consciousness of a unified experience” (PR 108). Whitehead differentiates unified experience from the harmonization of cells or reactions that do not require a unified center of control. A plant, for example, or certain insects or aquatic creatures, can regenerate body parts when injured. A mammalian heart, given adequate stimulants, can

³⁷ Shaviro, 18.

³⁸ Shaviro, 18.

also go on beating after being removed from the body. Whitehead's point is not that these phenomena or reactions are purely deterministic. Rather, he makes the case that centrality of control is on a continuum. "The living body," he writes, is always "a coordination of high-grade actual occasions," but in a plant, for example, "the occasions are much nearer to a democracy" (PR 108). Even if it loses a part, for example, many plants can still grow.

As the centrality of control intensifies in organisms, "The harmonized relations of the parts of the body" intra-act toward a "presiding personality" (PR 109) akin to how we might think of the brain and/or central nervous system as a monarchy of what Whitehead calls "central personal dominance" (108). Thus a society can be a living body like my own, or it can be something like the Great Pyramid, which also endures through time, its occasions sharing a common inheritance and diversified mentalities. Yet, as soon as one assents to the differentiation between a democratic society like a plant and a monarchical society with central personal dominance like a dog or person, a hierarchy—even if a fluid one—is in place.

4.2. Animal ethics in a Process perspective

For Process ethicist Dan Dombrowski, this hierarchy is an invaluable tool if one seeks to defend an ethics toward animals or the environment. In fact, as Whitehead has made clear, "all societies require interplay with their environment; and in the case of living societies this interplay takes the form of robbery" (PR 105). This assertion is summarized in Whitehead's well known, succinct, and perhaps only ethical statement that "whether or no it be for the general good, life is robbery. It is at this point that with life morals become acute. The robber requires justification" (PR 105). Dombrowski

attempts to craft a Process ethics toward animals that refutes justifications for robbing (some) creaturely life.

To start, Dombrowski is not concerned with the question of traditional moral theories, namely what attributes define an acting, moral agent. Rather, his “argument from marginalized cases” looks to those excluded from the framework of agency and asks what properties one must possess to be a moral patient, or one deserving of moral care.³⁹ With Butler, Dombrowski asks what properties makes for a *grievable life*, but he also presses her work further by offering an answer beyond the human.

Germane to this project, Dombrowski proposes attributes for moral consideration that fall between what he sees as the very high bar of rationality (that few creatures meet) and a very low bar of “life” more generally set forth by the likes of pro-life Christians, Albert Schweitzer, and the Jains. His middle path for defining moral consideration or grievability names sentiency as a “defensible” and “consistent” criterion that includes any creature with a central nervous system as one with interests of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain.⁴⁰ Dombrowski anchors his argument in Whitehead’s “revolt of dualism”⁴¹ that emphasizes continuity between human and nonhuman life as both possessing degrees of mentality in a “scale of becoming,”⁴² as well as the fact that sentient humans and animals are both “personal societies” that sustain a persistent character.⁴³ This processive lens demonstrates the capacity of animals to self-preserve and self-determine, a creative

³⁹ Daniel A. Dombrowski, “Which Lives Are Grievable?” in *Butler on Whitehead: On the Occasion*, eds. Roland Faber, Michael Halewood, and Deena M. Lin (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 202.

⁴⁰ Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 203.

⁴¹ Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 208.

⁴² Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 207.

⁴³ Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 209.

individuation beyond species that clarifies that we are acting toward *this* cow and not cowhood more broadly.⁴⁴ Dombrowski also draws upon John Rawl's theory of "reflective equilibrium" by which justice demands that we hold intuitions together with judgment. This move allows him to critique Process thinkers who claim "we can eat what we wish as long as we do so 'mindfully,' by recognizing the loss in intrinsic value that occurs when we eat nonhuman animals."⁴⁵ He explains, "All of us, or almost all of us recoil emotionally at the thought of (more so at the sight of!) a cow having its carotid artery slit. This emotional reaction needs to be reconciled with the justification we give for our eating practices (or robberies)."⁴⁶ Those who eat meat must confront the "disequilibrium between emotional response and rational justification."⁴⁷

Without question, Dombrowski's argument sounds a valuable disruption in a community of Process thinkers who either ignore animal issues altogether or approach animal ethics quite passively. His attempt to theorize a moral theory toward animals by applying a rigorous logical framework to the fluidity of Process thought is an example of the risky coalitions I referred to in the previous chapter. His emphasis on emotional connectivity makes him a unique voice among animal rights advocates and Process philosophers. However, I see several limitations within Dombrowski's project.

In spite of extending perceptive experience to all entities through Whitehead's panexperientialism, Dombrowski preserves moral consideration only for those bodies who, like (even marginalized) humans, possess sentiency due to a central nervous system. Although he reasserts James Rachel's claim that "[The argument from marginal cases]

⁴⁴ Dombrowski, "Which Lives," 217.

⁴⁵ Dombrowski, "Which Lives," 211.

⁴⁶ Dombrowski, "Which Lives," 211.

⁴⁷ Dombrowski, "Which Lives," 211.

. . . is nothing but the consistent application of the principle of equality to decisions about what should be done . . . about our relation to the other creatures that inhabit the earth,”⁴⁸ he denies any (much less equal) consideration of “microscopic sentience,” which he dismisses as the “primitive feeling involved in sense *reception*” versus higher sense “*perception*.”⁴⁹ This bifurcation allows him to dismiss the sentience of plant life with a statement like, “Pruning apple trees . . . and decapitating cows are hardly morally equivalent actions.”⁵⁰ In fact, he goes further to that say that plants and simple animals without a central nervous system “are not grievable” because we do not perceive them to be subjects-of-a-life.⁵¹ He leans on Butler, though assumes too much in doing so,⁵² to suggest even that “fetuses in the early stages of pregnancy are not grievable,” due to their lack of a central nervous system.⁵³

While Dombrowski has reformed the “subject-of-a-life” by basing it upon sentience rather than rationality, he remains caught in the same trap of identity-based

⁴⁸ Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 206.

⁴⁹ Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 207.

⁵⁰ Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 213.

⁵¹ Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 213.

⁵² Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 214. Dombrowski cites Butler’s comparison of pro-life positions that ascribe rights to fetuses to those attempts to bestow rights on nonhuman animals (*Frames of War*, 16) in order to reiterate the measure of sentience as the defining feature warranting the grievability (or not) of late and early term fetuses (and by extension animals with and without a nervous system). However, Butler’s aim in defining “grievable life” is specifically *not* in service of “drawing lines”—as Dombrowski points out—but in interrogating the very social practices and limits that frame life as grievable or not. Although Butler has typically only explored the frames defining human life—namely nationalism, gender, race, religious identity, and rationalism—she begins to interrogate the practices by which the nonhuman is excluded as well in her essay discussed in Chapter Two of this project. Additionally, the phenomenon of grievability takes precedence for Butler, as an epistemic and visceral experience that challenges the very analytic frameworks and practices that Dombrowski is defining and reperforming.

⁵³ Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 214.

approaches described in the second chapter. An unwavering anthropocentrism persists in his moral framework that ascribes to humans “*partial transcendence of animality*” based on “intermittent rationality” and language.⁵⁴ For Dombrowski humans are “the measurers of nature, but not necessarily the measure . . . the primary beholders of value . . . but not necessarily the only holders of such value.”⁵⁵ Additionally, his analytic approach to grievability runs in direct contradiction to the “reflective equilibrium” he advocates. For example, he exhorts meat-eaters to include in their judgments the intuitions and emotional responses elicited at the killing of a cow, but overlooks the fact that many people do intuit and feel the loss of plant life deeply—one need only think of the Chipko “tree hugging movement” of rural Indian women protecting the trees they depended on for livelihood from deforestation—not to mention the fact that many men and women feel deep grief after abortion or miscarriage of an early-term fetus.

Finally, Dombrowski’s dismissal of worldviews that advocate the respect for all life belies a legalistic and rationalistic frame that demands consistency in every situation and nearly equates moralizing with criminalizing. For example, he states that reverence for all life means that “we would not be morally permitted to mow, or even walk on, grass because living insects would be killed; cut out cancerous tumors because cancer cells are (unfortunately) quite alive and well, or even breathe if perchance we would suck in living organisms that would be killed.”⁵⁶ This hyperbolic depiction is inaccurate at best and paternalistically Orientalist at worst. Not only does it simplify the complexities of Jain metaphysics—and the systematic exploration of empiricism and sentience much

⁵⁴ Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 208.

⁵⁵ Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 205.

⁵⁶ Dombrowski, “Which Lives,” 203.

wider than Dombrowski's own that is at the heart of Indian philosophy more broadly—by reducing it to a naïve and impossible attempt at purity, but he also holds it captive to a western framework of legal enforcement and consistency. As will hopefully be evident by the end of this project, Jains simply do not approach matters of life and death this way. The Jain notion of nonviolence shines a light on the humanist limits of grievability or perceived vulnerability that are constrained only to the five dominant senses of western empiricism. Ahimsa, as I will show, is about a growing co-feeling with all life that does not take the five human senses as the measure of all existence, nor does it aim to circumscribe legalistic norms that must be adhered to dogmatically in all times and places. One can consider the feelings of a cow as well as a spider they remove from the shower, an aphid they choose not slap, or a desert or forest floor they tread carefully upon, without being reduced to relativism. And is not this kind of breadth and flexibility just what ecological societies will require? System, oceans, waterways, reefs, honeybees, air molecules, soil biodiversity are not normatively perceived as “subjects” in the west. Yet, they are the very conditions of existence, upon which we and many vulnerable, so-called “sentient” animals and marginalized populations depend. One's perception and co-feeling can grow in myriad ways.

Brian Henning utilizes Whitehead's metaphysics to argue exactly this point. Unlike the moral limits drawn by Dombrowski, Henning's “ethics of creativity,” in his book by the same name, extends to all life. “Existence as such,” he writes, “no matter how small, weak, or insignificant, has value in and for itself, for others, and for the

whole.”⁵⁷ Given that all life is characterized by subjective experience and processive creativity, however slight, Henning affirms that everything in the universe counts, that “To be actual is to have value.”⁵⁸ Henning rejects any ultimate preference for human life, as well as the attributes of rationalism or sentiency characteristic of most modern ethical theories,⁵⁹ and comes to the radical conclusion that “the scope of our direct moral concern may exclude nothing from its reach.”⁶⁰ Almost in direct contradistinction to Dombrowski, Henning asserts that every existent is “*at least* a moral patient . . . everything is an object of direct moral concern.”⁶¹ Additionally, his approach to morality repudiates legalism insofar as moral philosophy “must be as dynamic and fluid as the cosmos itself,”⁶² and he resists traditional structuralisms since morality must be worked out in concrete situations and not prescribed beforehand.⁶³

Henning leans upon Frederick Ferré’s description of “kalogenesis,”⁶⁴ or the generation of beauty, to develop his own flexible “kalogenic structure of reality as the source and foundation of moral obligation.”⁶⁵ In other words, ethics aims not at normative actions toward specific individuals, but toward “the most inclusive perspective possible,”⁶⁶ or an “aesthetic” alignment of each individual’s aims with the well-being of

⁵⁷ Brian Henning, *Ethics of Creativity: Beauty, Morality, and Nature in a Processive Cosmos* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 143.

⁵⁸ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 40.

⁵⁹ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 144.

⁶⁰ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 143.

⁶¹ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 143, my emphasis.

⁶² Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 115.

⁶³ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 136.

⁶⁴ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 100. See also Frederick Ferré, *Being and Value: Toward a Constructive Postmodern Metaphysics* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), 340, 367.

⁶⁵ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 126.

⁶⁶ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 119.

its relevant surroundings. “The moment of religious consciousness,” Henning claims, “is the recognition that the value of the individual and the whole are not truly opposed.”⁶⁷

Nonviolence, within a kalogenic ethics of creativity, is an aesthetic act of inclusion in each moment that aims toward the greatest beauty for the largest number of individuals and systems.

There is much to be commended in Henning’s work and many overlaps exist with my own project. His recognition, for example, “that everything we do fosters or frustrates the ends of another,” not only echoes Whitehead’s admission that life is robbery, but also the Jain affirmation that life has a cost. This statement is the prerequisite for any vision of total liberation, alternative globalizations, and ecological societies. Yet I maintain some resistance—both theoretically and aesthetically—to Henning’s ultimate conclusions.

Foremost, Henning’s kalogenic universe reflects an organic and evolutionary framework that aims at “higher, more organized forms of beauty and experience.”⁶⁸ Though he problematizes Whitehead’s ranking of “grades” of simple and complex beauty, Henning himself remains tied to a “multidimensional continuum” or “scale”⁶⁹ that preserves a hierarchy of complexity. By this token, he can speculate that “If boulders were the highest form of organization, the earth would be a much less beautiful place.”⁷⁰ I fear that Henning falls into a similar trap as Dombrowski in that to finally remove all language of hierarchy (in this case a kalogenic assessment of grades of value, beauty, and degrees of complexity) will result in an ethic that is “grossly relativistic,”⁷¹ leaving one in

⁶⁷ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 120.

⁶⁸ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 110.

⁶⁹ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 112.

⁷⁰ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 110.

⁷¹ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 135.

new kind “moral paralysis.”⁷² Yet, I question whether moral paralysis of any kind is really the ethical issue as much as a kind of weakness of the will, a lack of inspiration to do otherwise—what the Greeks called *akrasia*—that I know what I should do and yet I do not do it.

At the end, Henning’s kalogenic structure is indeed representative of a process-organic model,⁷³ but it is precisely this organic structuralism that Whitehead himself seems to finally let go of in his later works. Henning’s search for even a flexible moral “order” and the “unity of a stable system”⁷⁴ runs counter to the ultimate unity-as-disunity Whitehead describes in his essay “Immortality” (described in more detail in Chapters Five and Six), that is so polyphonic as to tip the linearity of “beauty” into a wild and chaotic realm that seems to overflow the language of value, ethics, kalogenic structure, and morality. I am not at all certain that Whitehead, nor I, would finally agree that the beauty humans can create is more than a planet full of boulders, nor that these modes of complexity are independent of one another. Mars, for example, has no “life” and yet is it not a remarkable phenomenon in the universe? Given its gravitational pull on the earth, one might argue that the “beauty” or order it enables is pretty priceless. Further, the dual integration of the World of Fact and the World of Value and within every becoming that Whitehead describes in his essay “Immortality”—as I will argue in the chapters to come—presses beyond these grades of complexity toward incredible visions where every value can be folded back into any becoming.

⁷² Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 144. Henning refutes tradition notions of “moral paralysis,” but his self-consciousness of relativism still suggests that a flat ontology is insufficient for the ethics of creativity he proposes.

⁷³ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 144.

⁷⁴ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 135.

Perhaps it is that I picture the widest perspective possible more as the surrealism of Dalí rather than the beauty of Henning's Monet.⁷⁵ And my resistance is also, in part, due to the influence of ecofeminist authors who have shaped my own thinking by decisively undermining the views of conservationists like Leopold and Rolston that Henning draws upon in different degrees.⁷⁶ Ultimately, if actions do not depend upon complexity, as Henning assures readers they do not on the last page of his book, then why preserve the language of complexity, scale, and degrees in regards to actions?⁷⁷ The intended function of ethics, it seems to me, is not finally a matter of gauging moral equivalency or equity, but remains a matter of taste by which theory is challenged to create visions and methodologies that inspire and provoke the palate toward new flavors yet unimagined.

5. A Third Alternative—Moving in Two Directions at Once

The actual occasion itself offers another alternative to either a humanist hierarchy of sentience or a kalocentric structure of moral equity. As Butler asked at the end of her engagement with Whitehead, how do we move in two directions at once between political concerns in the “human” community and broader relations with the “nonhuman”? Much as the actual occasion is a coordination between a given past and a potential future, I argue that a creaturely approach to direct action must take place between the entanglements of the impersonal proto-ontological plane—which is not beholden to the

⁷⁵ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 155.

⁷⁶ Marti Kheel's book *Nature Ethics* devotes full individual chapters to Rolston, Leopold, Warwick Fox, and Theodore Roosevelt, pointing out latent paternalism, structuralism, and masculinist discourses that undergird their approach to wholes and parts. Though Henning stresses the value of both individuals and systems (120), he does not offer explicit critiques of Rolston or Leopold that would make clear his awareness of the implicit assumptions driving their work.

⁷⁷ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 190.

“human” nor to any ethico-moral-political frameworks, however flexible they may be—and a potential personal future, which is in many respects the starting point from which we act, speak, and consume with a central personal dominance.

Philosophy to date has been concerned primarily, if not exclusively, with the latter, relegating all that lies outside human experience and perception to the nonphilosophical, to the *lower* levels and *lesser* degrees, to the uninspiring boulders. As George R. Lucas Jr. has written, “Any attempt to get ‘outside of’ or ‘beyond’ [our personal or cultural context] is simply a fake.”⁷⁸ And while this reminder is helpful to combat any recourse to a fully isolated, objective point of view, it can also limit us from the expectation that we can feel and perceive more widely than we currently do. As Henning suggests, “to begin with human experience does not mean that we must end with human experience.”⁷⁹ Each of us must start where we are, but that is only the beginning.

In fact, Deleuze suggests that something decidedly not “human” or personal—what he calls the “nonphilosophical” plane of becoming—is an integral part of our personal experience and thus cannot be separated from it, nor from our ethico-political philosophies. As argued by Whitehead and Barad (and hinted at by Butler), our existence and our philosophizing of it presuppose an impersonal, nonphilosophical, proto-ontological plane of relations from which actual occasions and even quanta territorialize themselves and our common world. Such life cannot be, according to Deleuze, judged “in the name of the Law or of Values, or even by virtue of their conscience,” (or I will add

⁷⁸ George R. Lucas Jr., “Agency after Virtue,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 28 (1988): 300.

⁷⁹ Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 140.

“sentience,”) “but by the purely immanent criteria of their existence.”⁸⁰ The theoretical challenge is to cultivate concepts that gesture toward and exemplify the reality of immanence—that hold the impersonal and personal together in what Deleuze calls, “a plane of immanence that constitutes the absolute ground of philosophy, its earth or deterritorialization, the foundation on which it creates its concepts.”⁸¹

Our experience of life—and its limitations—it seems, is directly connected to the creation of concepts, and which comes first is difficult to tell. Deleuze explains that “Both the creation of concepts and the instituting of the plane are required, like two wings or fins,”⁸² a dual and intractable coordination between action and thought that both *territorializes* the nonphilosophical—or proto-ontological plane—and *conceptualizes* that very plane through wild, unruly internal collisions. That Deleuze describes this impersonal/personal intra-play as two halves of a creaturely apparatus of wings or fins is a credit to his own embodied thought—that the one meta-project requires two movements on behalf of the multiplicity.

Whitehead’s metaphysics are anarchic, subversive, and dysfunctional precisely because they aim neither toward a fully flat ontology or pure equity or a fully personal humanist hierarchy. Rather, becoming is the destabilizing coordination between the two—from the given variety of the past toward new unifications of the future or from the exploitation and exclusion of de-realized bodies toward imaginative concepts broad enough to facilitate new modes of inclusion. Direct action is always an intra-action amid entanglements that is nothing less than the becoming with the many toward a new One,

⁸⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 72.

⁸¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 41.

⁸² Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 41.

which adds itself again to the multitude, slowly shaping the open future. It is tangible fact in the sense that physical and singular bodies are territorialized in the process. But it is also simultaneously virtual in that becoming requires a conceptual leap beyond any pure “material” constraints—toward what does not yet exist, a activation or expression of (even neglected) potentials that conceptually “constitutes the people to come and the new earth,” before they actually arrive.⁸³

In Chapter Five, we will return to the actual occasion as a model for what I am calling direct intra-action amid entanglements and interrogate what that looks like in terms of theorizing the goal of Critical Animal Studies, namely total liberation, alternative globalizations, and ecological societies. Before we get there, we must look at another creaturely cosmology that subverts dominant paradigms. We enter into another double movement, leaving one foot in the west of Process thought and stepping toward the eastern tradition of Jainism, a minor religion of India that sounds a major chord of creaturely dissonance in the humanist field. The becoming of this project is an unruly coordination between these geographic, philosophical, and creaturely folds.

⁸³ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 109.

Chapter Four

Disruptive Souls: Empirical Reversals in Jain Cosmology

The Arhats and Bhagavats of the past, present, and future, all say thus, speak thus, declare thus: all breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor driven away . . . Correctly understanding [this] law, one should arrive at indifference for the impressions of the senses, and ‘not act on the motives of the world.’ ‘He who is not of this mind, how should he come to the other?’

—*Acārāṅga Sutra*

In the Jain bird hospital in Delhi, caregivers minister to injured street birds, offering pain medication and antibiotics, providing casts for broken wings, and releasing them when they are fully recovered. Poet William Meredith described the tradition of the Jain animal sanctuary, or *pinjarapole*, this way:

. . . [T]his small, gentle order of monks and nuns...trust in faith, cognition, and nonviolence to release them from rebirth. They think that birds and animals—like us, some predators, some prey— should be ministered to no less than men and women.¹

But this is an incomplete and slightly romanticized version of the story. To begin with, Jain bird hospitals are often closed to predatory birds that hunt and kill other creatures. The Delhi hospital’s official policy is to treat raptors only on an outpatient basis, if at all, while other birds can stay and recover. In addition, Jains at the hospital—or any of the numerous Jain-run bird sanctuaries throughout India—for all their personal care, will not euthanize terminally injured birds. Birds that can be treated and released are. Those who cannot will stay in the hospital working through their karmic burden despite disfiguration

¹ William Meredith, “The Jain Bird Hospital in Delhi,” Poetry Foundation, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/171852> (accessed September 1, 2012).

or terminal injury. As one blogger wrote after visiting the hospital in Delhi and encountering “stacked cages of injured pigeons . . . [many] in terrible shape . . .”

See, this is the problem with religion: they are so driven by their dogma that no animal should be killed, that they do not see the obvious ethical problem of allowing suffering animals to go on living without the benefit of euthanasia. Even PETA euthanizes suffering animals.²

In the west, where merciful euthanasia is seen as an ethical act, allowing birds to linger in distress may seem heartless. But within a metaphysics of becoming where all creaturely life has creative agency, Jains do not claim an unequivocal right to decide on another body’s behalf, especially regarding death. Not only would the one performing the killing or approving the death incur negative karma and hinder their path toward liberation, but it is also considered a disservice to the animal.³ Every creature has a right to work out their karmic burden without interference, to configure their own karmic path. Jains earn karmic credit by assisting other life (as well as by not harming through nonviolence), but there is no expectation that they claim paternalistic knowledge for another. Certainly there have been moments where this commitment has been challenged, for example, when Gandhi controversially authorized the euthanasia of an injured calf. Yet by and large, Jains are loathe to decide the death of another. On the one hand, the logical extension of Jain nonviolence appears as the compassionate attempt not to harm or interfere with other karmic souls. On the other hand, this doctrine of noninterference appears cruel, lacking all sentimentality.

² Lonnie Bruner, “The Jain Bird Hospital/Anti-Euthanasia Center in Delhi,” Lonnie Bruner Blogspot, <http://lonniebruner.blogspot.com/search?q=Jain+Bird+Hospital> (accessed on April 15, 2011), referring to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

³ Christopher Key Chapple, “Inherent Value Without Nostalgia: Animals and the Jaina Tradition,” in *Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics*, ed. Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton (New York: Columbia Press, 2006).

Standing in the middle of this conundrum is exactly where I found myself in the summer of 2010 when I traveled and studied with a variety of Jains through the International School for Jain Studies. Like life itself, the lived practice of Jainism rarely conforms to the normative descriptions one finds in the pages of a book. But the idiosyncrasies invite a richer, more multivalent (if at times frustrating) engagement with an ancient tradition whose commitments, according to philosopher and professor of Jainism Jeffery Long, represent “not only a rejection, but a *reversal* of the values that are dominant in contemporary Western society . . . ”⁴ For Jains, both action and refraining from action are deeply tied to their metaphysics. A fuller understanding of this creaturely cosmology challenges any romanticized ideas or easy dismissals of this ancient and complex tradition in which “the life of an insect may be every bit as important as my own . . . ”⁵ A provocative reversal indeed!

1. Who are the Jains?

Tracing its roots back as far back as the ninth-century BCE, Jainism prescribes a path of compassion and *ahimsa*, or non-violence, toward all living beings. Along with Buddhism and the *Cārvāka* materialists, Jainism developed as a heterodox, or *nāstika*, school of Indian philosophy that did not recognize the authority of the Vedas, and explicitly rejected Vedic animal sacrifice and the caste system that gave Brahmins exclusive authority in society. From its inception, it emerged as a nontheistic protest to the dominant culture, and offered an alternative way of approaching social order while cultivating a keen sensitivity toward the empirical world as alive and contributing to the creative advance of life.

⁴ Jeffery Long, *Jainism: An Introduction* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), xix.

⁵ Long, *Jainism*, xix.

Jain philosophy asserts that the world is populated by innumerable souls, called *jīvas*, who are reborn in different bodies over the course of hundreds of thousands of lifetimes in the attempt to reach *mokṣa*, or liberation. There is no deity in Jainism to enforce an orthodox way of living, but a series of twenty-four *Tīrthaṅkaras*, also called *Jinas* (from which the word “Jain” is derived), meaning those “fordmakers” who have crossed over the river of births and rebirths, forging a path for others to follow. The last two of these are understood to be historical persons: *Mahāvīra*, an elder contemporary of the Buddha in the sixth-century BCE, and *Pārśvanātha* in the ninth-century BCE.

According to Jainism, each *jīva* transmigrates, or moves from one body to another at death, based on causal consequences of thought, action, and speech brought on by karma. All Indian traditions share a version of karma, but as I will explain later, Jain karma is unique in two ways. First, karma is seen as subtle particles that adhere to the *jīva*, and second, any karmic punishment or reward must be understood as “divinely self-inflicted” since each *jīva* is understood to be its own divine.⁶

Many are familiar with Jainism only through the caricature of extreme ascetic practices engaged in by Jain monks and nuns. Monastic activities such as going without clothing, walking barefoot, refusing to travel by bicycle or car, fasting from food and water, wearing a mouth cover to guard against inadvertently inhaling organisms, and carrying a peacock feather broom to sweep the ground clear before sitting, are indeed an

⁶ Thanks to Christopher Key Chapple for this clarifying phrase. Different schools within what is typically considered “Hinduism” also identify a divine aspect of the soul or self, though key differences with the Jain understanding persist. Advaita Vedānta, for example, dispenses with any notion of ultimate multiplicity, eventually subsuming difference in a One-all Brahman. The Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika schools, however, do admit multiple “reals” in addition to Brahman, called *puruṣas*. Jainism, however, maintains no single unifying force outside the intra-activity of karma, and describes each *jīva* as its own transcendent immanent Transcendent.

essential aspect of the Jain community as a means of reducing impact on other life forms. It is important to note, however, that most global Jains are not monastic, though they, too, practice smaller vows (*anuvratas*) of nonviolence.⁷ In practical terms, for nonmonastic Jains in India and in diaspora communities around the world,⁸ this means choosing a vocation that reduces injury to life,⁹ contributing a significant portion of one's income to charitable needs like education, medical services, and animal hospitals, as well as adhering to a verdant and unique vegetarianism that eschews meat, eggs, honey and certain root vegetables whose cultivation either destroys the entire plant, or is especially disruptive to the growing environment. An increasing number of Jains avoid dairy as well since modern farming causes tremendous suffering to cows and calves. Additionally, many Jains eat after dawn and before dusk to reduce interference with bacteria that thrive in cool temperatures and insects drawn to flame or artificial light. Jains do not store

⁷ Jainism is not a "pacifist" tradition according to rigid standards. Jainism allows for self-defense, including military duty. Jains have been monarchs, military commanders, and soldiers. Of course, many other Jains eschew these paths. See Padmanabh Jaini, "Ahimsa and 'Just War' in Jainism," in *Ahimsa, Anekanta and Jainism*, ed. Tara Sethia (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), 52-60.

⁸ There are diverging accounts of the number of worldwide Jain adherents, from between 4-12 million globally. For more information see: "Jains: Adherents," at University of Cumbria Division of Philosophy and Religion at <http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/jainism/jains.html> or Jain Heritage Centers at www.jainheritagecentres.com/index/jainismoutsideindia.html or Adherents.com at www.adherents.com/Na/Na_359.html. Additionally, Jains are non-sectarian in that anyone can follow the Jain path without any ethnic identity, membership, or creedal pronouncement.

⁹ Jains would not, for example, be a butcher or arms dealer. Many Jains gravitate toward professions like medicine, law, teaching, or banking. Some rural Jains are farmers although farming is understood to require degrees of violence. Many Jains are also in the gem or diamond business. Many of these so-called "nonviolent" vocations must be reevaluated in contemporary society for a more comprehensive look into the effects on the environment, child labor, and the economic impact on vulnerable communities. One Jain professional I met viewed his consulting work with Coca-Cola, Walgreens, and pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly as a sign of success due to his Jain values, but had little awareness of corporate violence, unfair trade practices, animal testing, etc.

leftover food to avoid drawing bacteria and they filter their water before drinking.

Though this may sound like an incredible level of attention toward other life forms, these practices are significantly less rigorous than the great vows taken by sadhus and sadhvis.

Certainly such practices involve a great deal of attention and discipline. The Buddha himself found the path of Jain asceticism too extreme thus advocating his “middle way.” So why do they do it? The easiest, though perhaps not the most accurate, answer is that Jains believe in the soul within every life form. Indeed, the Jain cosmos can be divided up into *jīva*, meaning soul or life, and *ajīva*, or lifeless phenomenon like medium of rest, medium of motion, space, time, and matter. *Ajīva* are not oppositional factors, but rather constitutive instruments of the *jīva*. For example, space provides the locus of extension for the *jīva*, the mediums of rest and motion provide counter stabilities that make movement and stillness possible, and time is the real but imperceptible condition for all changing modes and forms. Matter is always enabled by the intra-play between these conditions and enlivened with any of the innumerable *jīvas* in existence. According to Jainism, *jīvas* exist everywhere, in every life form. Each water droplet, flame, breeze and light ray, not to mention each organic life like a blades of grass, ant, or sacred cow, houses a soul. Jains do not speculate about a time before this combination of *jīva*-plus-*ajīva* came to be, nor do they posit any current life form as lacking a soul.

When it comes to the basic premise of soul plus matter, Jainism describes a very flat ontology that applies to every expression of creaturely life, independent of our thoughts about it. In this way, Jainism maintains a very realist position. As mentioned in Chapter One, Bina Gupta asserts that, “The philosophical outlook of Jainism is a metaphysical realism and pluralism as it holds that the objects exist independently of our

knowledge and perception of them, and that these objects are many.”¹⁰ However, it is most common to find Jains referring to their own tradition as one that is deeply oriented toward empiricism. This may seem out of place given the commitment to an entity like the *jīva*, not to mention the entire karmic system upon which Jain cosmology rests. However, this is the first clue that will help us to understand the *reversal* of western values referred to by Long. Jains begin with an empirical reversal that acknowledges human senses, thought, and perception, but in no way limits or measures the living world according to those faculties.

2. Empirical Reversals

Modern Jains often refer to Jainism as a “scientific religion.” Many Jains consider their tradition scientific because of its overriding concern, not only with spiritual pursuits, but also with “phenomena of the material world and the living beings in the universe.”¹¹ For example, Jain scriptures “detail many aspects concerning the physical world, including physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and astronomy, architecture, geology, medical sciences, food science and the like . . .”¹² It has been called the “religion for scientists” because of its emphasis on rationalism, experimentation, and empirical verification.¹³ And it has been said that “Jainism is the only religious system that recognizes clearly the truth that *religion is a science*.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Bina Gupta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy: Perspectives on Reality, Knowledge, and Freedom in Indian Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 67.

¹¹ Natubhai Shah, *Jainism: The World of the Conquerors*, Volume 1 (Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 129.

¹² Shah, *Conquerors*, 129.

¹³ Duli Chandra Jain, “Past, Present and Future of Jainism,” (lecture, Mahaveer Jayanti Celebration circa 1990), The Jain Study Circle, <http://www.jainstudy.org/JSC7.07DCJAA.pdf> (accessed June 30, 2010).

¹⁴ Upadhyaya Munishri Kamakumar Nandi Ji, “Jainism is Absolutely Scientific,”

This last phrase will likely give some readers pause, especially if they have been raised in the post-Enlightenment west, where empirical science is that which can be proven as fact, while religion remains in the subordinate category of unverifiable belief. To claim that religion is a science is as near to heresy as one gets in secular society, which is what makes the claim all the most important to dwell upon.

The attempt to make a religious tradition amenable to science is not without precedent. Buddhism, accord to Richard King, entered the western imagination soon after the 1859 publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, as a philosophical tradition that avoided the dichotomy of evolution versus creationism, and was thus seen as more amenable to science. The question "How scientific is Buddhism? . . . was initially a Western debate," asserts King, "since cultural power is overwhelmingly granted to the natural sciences."¹⁵ Thus, "no one seems to ask 'How Buddhist is modern science,'" belying the complex history by which the west's epistemic frameworks became the comparative measure for other world- and life-views.¹⁶

Jainism's roots go back long before Jainism proper emerged as a defined community, to the naturalist philosophers of the subcontinent. According to Dale Riepe in *The Naturalistic Tradition in Indian Thought*, Indian naturalists accept that: (1) sense experience is the most effective way to gain knowledge, (2) knowledge is not innate or mystical but must be acquired, (3) the world is real and not just an idea, (4) the world manifests facets of regularity and order that do not preclude responsibility, (5) the world

Jainpushb, <http://www.jainpushp.org/scientific.htm> (accessed online June 30, 2010), my italics.

¹⁵ Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and 'The Mystic East'*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 151.

¹⁶ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 151.

causes itself and no supernatural force is needed, and (6) the goal of human life is to discover one's proper place in the world.¹⁷ Jainism follows this naturalist framework in nearly every way with the exception that ultimate knowledge, or omniscience, is possible as a pure perception and potential that is not limited by the boundaries of discreet individualism. But more on that later.

For now it suffices to say that Jain philosophy rests significantly on direct sense perception of the changing world. However, Jain empiricists, unlike empiricism in the west, include subtle perception as a major aspect of the senses, including the perception of time, of qualities, and of elemental particles that are formless, but which are the “basis of form . . . ”¹⁸ In fact, many schools of Indian philosophy emphasize subtle perception of and within a living multiplicity. Yoga, for example, is predominantly the practice of binding one's attention to the manifold aspects of a dynamic reality, in all its permanent, fluctuating, physical, mental, emotional, material, and immaterial modes.¹⁹ That one emulates creaturely aspects in yoga postures—like the tree, rabbit, cobra, stick, or thunderbolt—is evidence of the attempt to cultivate alternative perceptions. Practitioners do not just bend their bodies into the shape of a tortoise or mountain, but actually endeavor to inhabit those perceptive realities that, according to Christopher Key Chapple, “align human physicality with the larger animal order.”²⁰ Creaturely life is expansive in Indian thought, inclusive of elemental forces like water and fire, as well as diverse

¹⁷ Dale Riepe, *The Naturalistic Tradition in Indian Thought* (1961; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996), 6.

¹⁸ Riepe, *Naturalistic Tradition*, 95.

¹⁹ B. K. S. Iyengar, *Light on Yoga: Yoga Dipika* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 19.

²⁰ Christopher Key Chapple, “Indic Traditions and Animals: Imitation, Reincarnation, and Compassion,” in *Call to Compassion: Religious Perspectives on Animal Advocacy*, ed. Lisa Kemmerer and Anthony J. Nocella II (New York: Lantern Books, 2011), 16.

organisms.

Jains affirm five empirical senses in the living world, and a sixth sense of omniscience that I will touch upon later and in the next chapters. Their taxonomy of life starts with the single sense of touch in immobile plants, trees, microorganisms, earth bodies and water, fire and air bodies. The smallest particle, called a *paramanu*, is also a single-sensed life form with a momentary life span akin to an atom. Two-sensed beings possess the sense of taste and include such organisms as leeches, worms and mollusks. The third sense of smell includes most insects and spiders. Vision is the fourth sense possessed by butterflies, bees, wasps, and flies, etc. Bodies in the final level possess all five senses such as reptiles, birds and mammals, as well as humans. Five-sensed beings are endowed with a mind,²¹ though, as Ellison Banks Findly argues in her book *Plant Lives: Borderline Beings in Indian Traditions*, even single-sensed plants are endowed with an interior consciousness, sentience, and the ability to be bearers of karma.²²

What do these sense divisions tell us? Primarily, the Jain taxonomy makes clear that sense perception is not the specialized attribute of humans apprehending the world. The “reversal” Long refers to is first and foremost an empirical reversal, or more accurately, an empirical dispersion where perception is the immanent activity of all creative change, the basis of all form, the fundamental attribute of creaturely life differently expressed. Amid a flattened field of sense perception, the presence of one, two, three, four, or five senses functions not merely as hierarchical division, but rather shows the diversity of sense experience—much of which is very different than what is

²¹ *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 2.22-24, trans. Manu Doshi (Ahmedabad, India: Shrut Ratnakar, 2007), 40-42.

²² Ellison Banks Findly, *Plant Lives: Borderline Beings in Indian Traditions* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008), 70-147.

perceived in the five human sense organs and yet all of which represents a valid perspective and experience in the world. Jains posit an enormous diversity of creaturely life, namely 8.4 million different kinds of sensing species, each with a unique sense percepta and point of view. With this claim, Jainism validates a vast multiplicity of experiencing entities, as well as manifold modes of perception. Amid these differences, the *jīva* is common to all, maintaining similarity and continuity, and to which I will now turn.

3. Disruptive Souls in Ancient India

The presence of a unique soul within every entity serves two purposes in Jainism. The first is to establish a fundamental similarity *between* all existent entities. While sense perception may differ in each material body, the presence of a *jīva* is a universal similarity shared across the board. The second establishes a fundamental continuity *within* one line of karmic transmigration—the process of birth, death, and rebirth—across countless lifetimes and innumerable bodies. The *jīva* is the singular potential that persists through each rebirth, its capability for omniscience insisting from within its different bodily and sensory forms.

However, unlike the school of Advaita Vedānta that equates the many souls with the One Brahman, Jainism recognizes many ultimate or real entities.²³ The *jīva* locates creative potential and authority within *every* existent entity in the form of immanent power, and not in multiple devas or a single Ultimate Reality outside. The *jīva* describes a continuous, creative power within each entity throughout numerous lifetimes, while

²³ Bina Gupta, “The Vedānta Darśana,” in *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy: Perspectives on Reality, Knowledge, and Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 225-32.

maintaining a karmic connection to the rest of the living universe. The jīva is also the mainspring of its own karmic path. The benefits or setbacks that a jīva experiences are the product of its own karmic history and action, the *divine self-infliction* I mentioned earlier, since each jīva is its own Ultimate.

The ultimacy of the jīva is not, however, a recipe to diminish the ajīva. In the absence of deity, it may be tempting to read the permanent jīva as a domineering power or spirit akin to an unchanging God that somehow trumps a world of material change, or as Michel Foucault suggests, “the soul is the prison of the body.”²⁴ But as Paul Masson-Oursel has made clear, Indian thought, “has never placed spirit and body in antithesis as two substances; even when [it] held them to be hostile to the other.”²⁵ On the contrary, Jain karma presupposes *both* the soul and matter as two intractably connected components of a dynamic reality, an example of the “empirical-transcendental doublets”²⁶ so pervasive in Indian formulations of the Seer/Seen or the Higher/Lower self, whose “relationship is reciprocal,” asserts Chapple, “not mutually abnegating.”²⁷ The persistent jīva bears the karmic accounts through subsequent lifetimes, but empirical matter is the expression and the condition of all karmic exchange. In other words, without the material body, the senses, the mind, and emotions that comprise the empirical self of the Seen—

²⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995; 1975), 30.

²⁵ Paul Masson-Oursel, *Comparative Philosophy*, trans. V. C. C. Collum (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., 1926), 138. Cited in Riepe, *Naturalistic Tradition*, 97-8.

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1994), 336. Cited in Gupta, *Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, 11.

²⁷ Christopher Key Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous: Patañjali's Spiritual Path to Freedom* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008), 3.

without all the various types of ajīva for that matter—the soul, or Seer, could not move toward its fullest potential.

In terms of realism, Jainism maintains strong ties to Indian naturalism and the schools like Buddhism and Cārvāka that emphasize ontological change, cycles, difference, and fluctuations. But it also maintains a degree of transcendent idealism that keeps it connected to the history of Vedic and Upaniṣadic expressions of the divine presence in each life that allows for continuity and permanence. The main difference for Jainism is that each jīva is its own divine authority rather than an expression of Brahman. Preserving both of these historical and metaphysical connections in the living intra-play of jīva and ajīva is what sets Jainism apart as a creaturely cosmology with the potential to unsettle dominant humanist paradigms, as well as anthropocentric philosophies based on either identity or difference. This intra-play should put us in mind of the third option beyond identity and difference described by Calarco in Chapter Two, namely a philosophical perspective of indistinction.

3.1. Between karmic indeterminacy and omniscience

Jain metaphysics posit precisely this kind of third alternative between identity and difference—between permanent jīva and changing ajīva. This creaturely cosmology does not posit similarity to the human or to human senses as the ultimate measure of creaturely life, nor is difference itself deified as the only existent. Rather, it is the within and between of relations that illumines the heart of each jīva’s creaturely journey in terms of karma. Jainism describes karma as a causal matrix that (1) affects each entity’s self-development within a singular inheritance of historic and present intra-actions, and (2) affects the karmic state of a multiplicity of other entities that affect and are affected by

actions, speech, and thoughts. Jain karma presupposes the presence of a persistent jīva that bears the karmic accounts through subsequent lifetimes. Ostensibly, the soul stays the same (a persistent substance or identity) while matter changes in its various modes and sensory capacities (difference and change). Much like philosophies of identity and difference examined in the second chapter, persistent jīva and changing ajīva combine to form the multiplicity of life we see around us. It is precisely this unprogrammed coordination between jīva and ajīva—identity and difference, permanence and flux—that defines the Jain karmic universe.

Unlike the karmic systems of Hinduism and Buddhism in which karma is a natural law of cause and effect, Jains posit a radically distinct notion of karma as its own type of matter, a microscopic dirt or subtle particles called *pudgala*, that pervade the entire universe, and stick to the field of each jīva due to vibrations created by activities of movement, thought, and speech, as well as various attitudes. Jīvas participate in the accrual and shedding of these karmic particles with every action and disposition. The capacity for perception is in direct proportion to the weight of a jīva's karmic "coat of clay," that burdens and obscures its capacity for full perception.

By maintaining the materiality of karma, Jains were able to retain the naturalist character of their philosophy. According to Padmanabh Jaini, Hindu karma would eventually include notions of "divine intervention in one's fate" while Buddhist karma admitted "boon-granting bodhisattvas . . ." ²⁸ He asserts, "Only Jainas have been absolutely unwilling to allow such ideas to penetrate their community, despite . . . a

²⁸ Padmanabh Jaini, *Collected Papers on Jaina Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010), 137.

tremendous amount of social pressure on them to do so.’’²⁹ Jain karma places responsibility *within* the immanent play between jīva and ajīva. The ongoing coordination between these two aspects is what allows the progress toward new modes of experience and wider fields of perception, on the way toward mokṣa, or liberation

In Jain metaphysics, full perception is the final goal of each jīva currently caught in the karmic and empirical wheel of birth, death, and rebirth. Full perception, or kevaljñān, refers to omniscience, a state that each jīva is capable of achieving in life, and is a primary characteristic of the liberated or transcendent soul in Jainism. But the transcendent jīva is different than classical notions of transcendence in three key ways. First, transcendent omniscience is not the overcoming of empiricism, but the fullest experience of it, in all of its manifestations, without the limit of a set number of senses or a specific organic form. Second, transcendent omniscience is particular to each jīva. A liberated jīva (called a siddha) is not subsumed into an undifferentiated One like Brahman, but retains its distinction as one among the multiplicity of singular jīvas in the universe, even after reaching mokṣa. Third, transcendent omniscience is not a fixed state, as though all truths are collapsed into a single Absolute knowing. On the contrary, the siddha is omniscient of all relations in the universe in a moment. Full prehension is the ability to perceive every facet of the multiplicity in the universe in unison. As long as the universe continues to change, so does the omniscience of the siddha. It is never fully removed from relationality with the living multiplicity. Rather than conceiving of liberation as an escape *from* the world of saṃsāra—as is often the accepted definition of

²⁹ Jaini, *Collected Papers*, 137.

nirvana—mokṣa is a liberation *into* the fullest possible perception of the dynamic universe in its fluctuating totality.

The point is that this transcendent ideal is not at all like the classical formulations of the Platonic forms or the all-powerful God. It is a shifting ideal unique to each creaturely life that informs the ongoing coordination *within* that entity and *between* that entity and other provocations. Each creaturely life exists in a karmic intra-play in which its karmic identity is in constant flux. The unification between jīva and ajīva is not given once and for all, but is the continuous de/re/territorializing of a wild karmic multiplicity in the present, toward the fluid ideal of increased or even full perception. The unification that binds creaturely life together is not a fixed One, but as in the previous chapter, it is the univocal *process* of coordinated perception that is common to all.

This process is not beholden to humanist frameworks, even though Jainism posits that humans alone can reach liberation. This may sound like a significant contradiction and I will attend to it briefly. It cannot be denied that Jainism preserves a special place for human life. Human form, and for some Jain sects, the male human form, is the pre-requisite for the mental, spiritual, and physical disciplines that lead to mokṣa.³⁰ This may sound like a humanist trump card, and indeed, as will be evident by the end of the chapter, Jains are not especially sentimental about creatures nor do they want to be

³⁰ The two primary sects of Jainism are *Digambara* (“sky clad” or “wearing the atmosphere”) and *Svetambara* (“white clad”). The two share most ethical and metaphysical commitments and sacred texts, and come from the same lineage of wandering ascetics (*Śramaṇa*). However, the Digambara community does not admit women as capable of achieving liberation since one must be unattached to all possessions, including clothing, and nudity is not acceptable for women. In the Svetambara tradition, male and female ascetics are both capable of achieving liberation and both wear a simple white covering for practical reasons. Svetambaras also believe that the 19th Tirthaṅkara, Mallinath, was a woman.

reincarnated as one. The primary aim for Jain practice is to respect the karmic agency of every creature through nonharm, by assisting when possible, and at times, refraining from interference. It is imperative to remember that the very notion of omniscience within Jain philosophy challenges any simple return to humanist hierarchy. Full omniscience is a reachable ideal that *jīvas* only reach after lifetimes of increasing perception, attention, and carefulness toward themselves and toward other life. Even for those historical personages who are said to have achieved it, their omniscience is decidedly not limited to human perception nor human form, but is precisely defined by breaking through the limits of empirical identities to the most comprehensive state of co-feeling with the entire universe. Indeed, this is the most accurate way to understand the Jain commitment to compassion—as an effort of co-feeling with the world in its present fullness—which is the capacity, gift, and burden of *every* *jīva*, regardless of its present form, which is always to a large degree karmically indeterminate, fluid, and multiple.

As in Whitehead's speculative framework, Jain cosmology posits, not beings, but a multitude of karmic becomings intra-acting in unpredictable ways that are not adequately understood through theories of identity or difference, comparison, or lack. Rather, every becoming *jīva* is karmically entangled at a proto-ontological level, wound into the wild multiplicity of empirical perceptions, karmic traces, and ideal possibilities—an increasing co-feeling inspired by the potential of omniscient perception—that is the promise and potential of each indistinct, creaturely life.

4. The Three Jewels of Jainism

These last pages have attempted to answer the question I posed at the beginning of the chapter: Why do Jains take such extreme measures to avoid harming or interfering

with other life? The answer to that question is not a simple one, but any attempt to begin formulating a reply must take into account a cosmology that has inverted and dispersed traditional notions of empiricism, defining perception—not as an attribute of humans alone—but as the immanent activity of all creative change. This activity is measured in terms of karmic exchange through which the development of each life is immanently entangled with the creaturely multiplicity. The potential of each *jīva* is actualized within every perception between the given multiplicity and the increasing capacity for greater depths and intensities of co-feeling and compassion, as exemplified in the liberated *siddha*, or omniscient ideal.

The Jain way of life then, is nothing but the ongoing, imperfect, and indistinct becoming of life that seeks to move in two directions at once—between the empirical entanglements of material relations and limitations of perception on one hand and a transcendent (though fully immanent) proto-ontological potential of increasing perception beyond human frameworks of recognition. From this perspective, the major precepts of Jainism will make more sense.

Both monastic and lay Jains follow the “Three Jewels” of Right perception (*saṃyag darśan*), right knowledge (*saṃyag jñāna*), and right conduct (*saṃyag charitaṇi*). As expressed in the *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, a sacred text revered by all Jain sects, *saṃyag darśan jñāna charitaṇi mokṣa mārga*, or “Right perception, right knowledge and right conduct constitute the path of liberation.”³¹ To perceive rightly is not a normative statement or an assent to dogma. On the contrary, it is the risky exposure to an empirical inversion that includes the total universe of perceiving activities—multiple modes and

³¹ *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, 1.1, trans. Manu Doshi (Ahmedabad, India: Shrut Ratnakar, 2007), 14.

types of perceptive becomings—in its scope. Right knowledge and right conduct derive directly from this metaphysical affirmation, akin to Process thought, that experiential perception infuses the creaturely universe and contributes to one's own karmic state.

For this reason, plant and animal life play important and diverse roles in Jainism. As Chapple points out, Jains “accord high status to animals as exemplars, friends, and past relatives.”³² As such, Jains do not eat animals nor do they keep pets, which they see as a form of enslavement that curbs the karmic agency of creatures. Additionally, Jain yoga, like other yogic systems, includes plant and animal poses that assist practitioners in aligning themselves with the broader creaturely multiplicity. Each of the twenty-four Tīrthāṅkaras is associated with an animal or natural phenomenon, called “cognizances.” For example, the first Tīrthāṅkara Rīṣabha is associated with a bull, and that shape is always inscribed into the base of his image. Without these etched symbols, the various identical Jina images—typically depicted in seated or standing meditation—would be impossible to differentiate.³³

These creaturely cognizances are often a body that the Tīrthāṅkara inhabited in a past life. For instance, the twenty-fourth Tīrthāṅkara Mahāvīra had a previous incarnation as a carnivorous lion. As the lion was preparing to tear its prey to pieces, he was visited by traveling Jain monks. The monks, noticing that the lion was receptive to teaching, emitted a wordless sound that conveyed the practice of compassion and nonviolence,³⁴ and the lion “was so deeply affected by their message that he renounced hunting and

³² Chapple, “Indic Traditions and Animals,” 15.

³³ Chapple, “Inherent Value without Nostalgia,” 245.

³⁴ Kristi Wiley, “Five-Sensed Animals in Jainism,” in *Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics*, ed. Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton (New York: Columbia Press, 2006), 250.

killing for food and eventually starved to death.”³⁵ After this, he was reborn in a higher heaven, skipping ahead of even humans in the karmic line, eventually being reincarnated as the venerable Mahāvīra.³⁶

Many Jain stories detail animals committing great acts of virtue or assistance. Another example takes place when two cobras, Padmāvatī and Dharanendra, are said to have provided life-saving shelter to Pārśvanātha, the twenty-third Tīrthāṅkara. In these stories, animals are seen as moral actors able to assume the religious vows³⁷ and Jain texts valorize noble creaturely qualities found in their spiritual leaders such as the *Kalpa Sūtra*’s description of Mahāvīra whose “senses were well protected like those of a tortoise . . . he was free like a bird . . . valorous like an elephant, strong like a bull, difficult to attack like a lion . . .”³⁸

As already mentioned, the overwhelming Jain commitment to the active betterment of creaturely life, as well as collective resistance to institutions that enslave creatures is striking. Jains have been instrumental in protesting the Gadhimai Mela Hindu festival in which upwards of 500,000 animals are sacrificed every five years in the open air to please Gadamai, the goddess of power.³⁹ In May of 2011, a Jain monk and 100

³⁵ Chapple, “Inherent Value,” 242.

³⁶ *Tīrthāṅkara* translates as “fordmaker,” meaning one who overcomes material attachments and crosses into *moksa*, making a way for others as well. Unlike the Buddhist notion of *Bodhisatva*, Tīrthāṅkaras are understood to act only as inspiration, but cannot actually assist other souls in a material way, nor intervene in natural events. Nevertheless devotional practices directed at specific Tīrthāṅkara or heavenly beings are common among many Jains in India and abroad.

³⁷ Padmanabh Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (1979; repr., New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001), 110n.

³⁸ *Kalpa Sūtra*, 5.118, trans. Hermann Georg Jacobi, in *Jaina Sutras: Part I and II* (1884; repr., [n. p.]: Forgotten Books, 2008), 207.

³⁹ Utpal Parashar, “25,000 Buffaloes sacrificed at Gadhimai Mela in Nepal,” entry posted November 24, 2009, *Hindustan Times*, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world->

supporters were arrested on the seventeenth day of the monk's fast unto death to protest the building of eight slaughterhouses in the state of Uttar Pradesh. This practice, called *dharnā* (from the root *dhṛ*—meaning to carry, uphold, or support),⁴⁰ was used in India during the eighteenth century as a means of compelling justice from an opponent, especially outside the door of a debtor.⁴¹ "Sitting in *dharnā*" is a mode of waiting in quiet, concentrated silence—often with the threat of fasting to death—in hopes that an opponent will accede to one's demand or change courses.⁴² Jain monks and nuns must receive permission from their elders to embark on this very disciplined path. In addition to running animal sanctuaries, Jain doctors and engineers have also developed prostheses for cows, dogs, cats, and peacocks, among others. These public practices are in addition to the daily acts of mindfulness and care that all Jains practice to varying degrees.

Nevertheless, Jains also understand that the life of a plant or animal is very difficult and being reborn in one of these forms is tantamount to karmic backsliding, a loss of perceptive capacity resulting typically from foolishness, greed, ego, and moral shortcomings, to be avoided at all costs. In spite of this, Jains recognize that their present

news/Nepal/25-000-buffaloes-sacrificed-at-Gadhimai-Mela-in-Nepal/Article1-479735.aspx (accessed January 5, 2013).

⁴⁰ Also from the Sanskrit *dhāraṇam* (holding, wearing), and related to *dhāraṇā*, the sixth limb of Patañjali's eight-stage path described in the *Yoga Sūtras* (3.1-3.3) that describes the practice of single-pointed focus.

⁴¹ Mary T. Boatright, *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 118-19. The author describes *dharnā*, fasting, and *hartal* (a short-term strike) as three methods of resistance utilized in *satyagraha*. In spite of his practice of fasting in the face of Colonial injustice, Gandhi is said to have denounced the practice of *dharnā* as "barbaric" (see Jai Narain Sharma, *Satyagraha* [Concept Publishing Co., 2008], 38) and warned against the fast as a dangerous, and even violent weapon that could coerce acquiescence without true conversion of the opponent's point of view (Boatright, 118-19). More research is needed on this complex practice.

⁴² Sir Monier Monier-Williams, "adhi-vasa," *Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Languages* (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2002), 22.

existence has been enabled by their previous incarnations in myriad creaturely forms and is still affected by creaturely life, a relational genealogy that they bear in their karmic inheritance. Given that every life form is capable of compassionate and deeply perceptive acts that can surpass even the virtues of humans, minimizing harm is a logical outcome. Additionally, each *jīva* might yet be reincarnated in one of these forms. The fly you swat might be bound up with the *jīva* of your mother or grandfather. The karmic indeterminacy and indistinction of identity requires imagination and embodied care.

Considering how significantly *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, figures into Jain philosophy, I will deal with the Third Jewel of right conduct in the next chapter where it can receive a fuller treatment as a mode of direct intra-action amid entanglements. For the remainder of this chapter, I want to dwell on the Second Jewel to underscore the ways that right knowledge, an arguably humanist framework of recognition, is always intra-active with the proto-ontological plane of perceptive activity. The impersonal and personal, the human and nonhuman, the political and metaphysical, are always mutually entangled in activities of karmic relevance, which is how Jains understand knowledge and why they have developed sophisticated theories of fluid relativity and epistemology.

4.1. Plural epistemologies as right knowledge

Jain epistemologies derive from the right perception of a cosmological multiplicity populated by as many kinds of creaturely feeling as there are innumerable *jīvas*. In Jain cosmography, one- through five-sensed beings only occupy a very small part of the universe or *loka*. Therefore, there are different types of knowledge that one must acquire to fully feel and perceive the diverse universe. The *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, for example, details five types of knowledge: intellectual knowledge garnered through the

senses, interpretive knowledge of words, symbols, and gestures, extra-sensory knowledge of bodies, extra-sensory knowledge of thoughts, and omniscience.⁴³ Omniscience, or *kevaljnān*, is the most comprehensive perception of the changing universe in a moment, and will be addressed in the following chapters.

Needless to say, with the multitude of *jīvas*, and a variety of types of knowledge, Jainism describes a doctrine of plurality—*anekāntavāda*—that according to Long, is best translated as “many-sided doctrine.”⁴³ *Anekāntavāda* functions as an epistemological attempt to account for this multiplicity of perspectives. Along with its two wings of *syādvāda* and *nayavāda*, these three concepts comprise the Jain doctrines of relativity and plural knowledge.

4.1a. *Anekāntavāda*. As a central philosophical doctrine in Jainism with potentially pre-Vedic origins, *anekāntavāda*’s fundamental claim is that all existent entities have infinite attributes.⁴⁴ Much like Whitehead’s actual occasion, existence in the Jain cosmos is “accepted as that which is characterized by emergence, perishing, and duration,” according to the sixth-century Jain logician Haribhadra in the *Saddarsanasmuccaya*.⁴⁵ On account of this dynamic state of becoming, it is said that an entity has infinite attributes and “cannot be reduced to a single characteristic or concept.”⁴⁶ The same entity is both permanent in some sense, and changing in another sense. Put another way, *anekāntavāda* is the metaphysical claim that reality is

⁴³ Jeffery D. Long, “Plurality and Relativity: Whitehead, Jainism, and the Reconstruction of Religious Pluralism,” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2000), 253.

⁴⁴ Bimal Krishna Matilal, *The Central Philosophy in Jainism: Anekanta-Vada* (Amedabad, India: Creative Printers Pvt. Limited, 1981), 3.

⁴⁵ Long, “Plurality and Relativity,” 253.

⁴⁶ Long, “Plurality and Relativity,” 117.

multifaceted with infinite qualities, and that as such, different qualities will appear when seen from any of the infinite number of different perspectives from which reality can be viewed.

Anekāntavāda validates the numerous qualities and modes that can be seen from different points of view. Anekāntavāda was a synthetic alternative between dominant strands of Brahmanism that emphasized the unchanging character of reality, or Brahman, and dominant strands of Buddhism that emphasized the momentariness of Reality. Jainism presents a metaphysical system that makes change as well as permanence mutually entangled features. The theory of anekāntavāda provides a way to conceptually approach both facets at the same time.

4.1b. Nayavāda. Nayavāda is a related doctrine that describes an “analytical method of investigating a particular standpoint which does not rule out other different viewpoints and is thereby expressive of a partial truth about an object.”⁴⁷ Given the multiplicity described in anekāntavāda, to say that “x is f,” is a one-sided perception, unconditioned by rival assertions that account for infinitude. According to Jain scholar Bimal Krishna Matilal, such propositions are “to be regarded as false.”⁴⁸ The truth value of any element of reality depends on the perspective from which it is viewed and must be complimented by rival perspectives.

Jains use a version of “The Blind Men and the Elephant” fable to express the multi-dimensionality of truth. The blind man who feels the elephant’s leg says it is like a pillar, the one who feels the tail says the elephant is like a rope, the one who feels the

⁴⁷ S. M. Shah, *The Dialectic of Knowledge and Reality in Indian Philosophy* (New Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1987), 19.

⁴⁸ Matilal, *The Central Philosophy in Jainism*, 3.

trunk says the elephant is like a tree branch, and so on. Nayavāda is the method of exploring how the elephant may be like a branch *and* a rope; how multiple, even conflicting perspectives, may be partially true and not true. Omniscience, or the potential for full perception, serves as the backdrop for these partial perspectives. Omniscience is the promise that even conflicting claims, including that of the elephant, can be held together without a loss of truth. Nayavāda illustrates the principle of living in harmony with people and creatures who embody different perspectives or belief systems.⁴⁹

4.1c. Syādvāda. Lest nayavāda sound too passive—after all, viewing a living elephant as an inert pillar is a major problem, and consenting to ideas or beliefs that one understands as just plain wrong can be equally regressive—there is one more wing to the Jain doctrines of relativity. If we consider nayavāda as a method of ongoing inquiry into multiple perspectives against the fluid backdrop of unbounded perception, syādvāda is a method of synthesis “designed to harmonize the different viewpoints arrived at by nayavāda.”⁵⁰ This synthesis is not permanent or total, but ongoing. Syādvāda is a continual processive thought experiment by which conflicting perspectives are held in creative contrast with one another as well as with concrete, changing happenings. Just as the actual occasion is an active coordination between what was and what might be, syādvāda is a valuation of many different perspectives in new creative moments. It does not require that all of the perspectives be merely repeated or held equally.

Syādvāda derives from the ontological pragmatism of the Jain position that reality is irreducibly complex and the apparent contradictions within our perceptions like

⁴⁹ Jain World, “The Blind Man and the Elephant,” <http://www.jainworld.com/education/stories25.asp> (accessed 7 February 2010).

⁵⁰ Jain World, “The Blind Man and the Elephant.”

“continuity and change, emergence and perishing, permanence and flux, identity and difference - actually reflect the interdependent, relationally constituted nature of things.”⁵¹ There is something inherently indeterminate, incomplete, or indistinct, about every element in our surroundings, even as we may perceive them as enduring. Where there appears to be continuity, emergence, permanence, and identity, there is also change, perishing, flux, and difference. Syādvāda is the explanatory method by which these multiple perspectives are held in tension, such that the elephant is both like a rope and like a branch; the elephant is both *not* like a rope and *not* like a branch.

Translatable literally as the “maybe doctrine,” or more accurately as the “doctrine of conditional or qualified assertion,” syādvāda in a non-exclusivist, non-absolutist form of speech, rooted in a metaphysics of relativity,⁵² much like Derrida’s concept of “erasure.” We speak a word as though there was a definite correlation between the stable term and its dynamic referent. As Derrida made clear, however, this representational correspondence is always faltering, so we put our words “under erasure,” as though to be continuously reminded of the limitations of language.⁵³ Syādvāda, to a point, functions similarly.

As described by Matilal, “‘syat’ means, in the Jain use, a conditional YES. It is like saying, ‘in a certain sense, yes.’”⁵⁴ As a participle meant to convey indefiniteness, Jains use it paradoxically, according to Long, “to coordinate the exclusive, one-sided claims made by various competing schools of thought with partially valid perspectives, or

⁵¹ Long, “Plurality and Relativity,” 253.

⁵² Long, “Plurality and Relativity,” 259.

⁵³ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 60.

⁵⁴ Matilal, *The Central Philosophy in Jainism*, 52.

nayas.”⁵⁵ The seven applications of *syādvāda* (a combination of *syat* or “in some respect” with *eva* or “absolutistic import”) results in seven possible truth claims that state:

1. In a certain sense, x exists.
2. In a certain sense, x does not exist.
3. In a certain sense, x exists and does not exist.
4. In a certain sense, x is inexpressible.
5. In a certain sense, x both exists and is inexpressible.
6. In a certain sense, x does not exist and is inexpressible.
7. In a certain sense, x does not exist, and is expressible.⁵⁶

Matilal suggests that Jains use this seven-fold formula as a method of refined concession within philosophical debate:

It concedes the opponent’s thesis in order to blunt the sharpness of his attack and disagreement, and at the same time it is calculated to persuade the opponent to see another point of view or carefully consider the other side of the case. Thus, the Jaina use of “*syat*” has both; it has a disarming effect and contains (implicitly) a persuasive force.⁵⁷

This double effect of disarming and persuading makes clear that these doctrines of relativity are not the same as relativism, meaning that which “affirms either that there is no truth, or that the truth, whatever it may be, is something altogether unknowable by human beings.”¹ On the contrary, the paradox of *absolute relativity*, affirms “the vital importance of the perspective from which a claim is made,”¹ while avoiding the transcendent logic of the One. Disagreements are perfectly acceptable, and against the backdrop of full and fluid perception, reductive positions can be evaluated, discarded, or reconfigured. Mahāvīra is recorded as saying, “Examining all wrong doctrines from all sides and in all respects, one should clearly understand and reject them.”⁵⁸ Harmonic agreement is not the point. Recombining different perspectives toward more creative and

⁵⁵ Long, “Plurality and Relativity,” 260.

⁵⁶ Matilal, *The Central Philosophy in Jainism*, 55.

⁵⁷ Matilal, *The Central Philosophy in Jainism*, 52.

⁵⁸ *Acārāṅga Sūtra* 1.5.6.1, 65.

comprehensive conceptual approaches is the aim.

This is where syādvāda diverges from concepts like “erasure,” in that Jains, unlike Derrida, posit a fluid possibility of full perception of multiple claims without loss. This possibility is what informs their own ongoing attempts at nonviolence in thought, word, and deed. The Jain way of life is a processive and creative reconfiguring toward an ever-increasing co-existence and co-feeling with other becomings, a quintessential win-win for the planetary multiplicity. Syādvāda is not content just to recognize difference, but seeks to create more adequate concepts with which we approach difference. In the limited world of empirical faculties, syādvāda is a practical methodology that serves to revise and enlarge our limited understanding of multiplicitous life.

Jainism’s reversal is tied to an inversion and dispersion of traditional notions of empiricism. Rather than limit empirical perception to humans, Jain cosmology extends perception to every jīva, affirming an immense multiplicity of self-determining entities who are also karmically entangled. Each jīva’s journey takes place between these karmic entanglements and the potential for increasing perception and co-feeling. The three primary tenants of Jainism reflect this developmental process and are, in themselves, methodologies through which to approach a many-sided and changing reality. The commitment both to act and refrain from acting evidenced in the Jain bird hospitals make up two sides of the same methodology-in-process. Whether this flexible approach to ethical action is sufficient to address the many crises facing creaturely life will be taken up in the next chapter as we jump right into the middle of the karmic process, exploring the architecture of the jīva alongside Whitehead’s actual occasion as a fresh model for direct intra-action.

Chapter Five

Direct Intra-Actions Amid Entanglements: Becoming as a Bridge to Reworlding

[One] is wise who perfectly knows the non-killing, who searches after the liberation of the bound.

—*Acārāṅga Sūtra*

A new creation has to arise from the actual world as much as from pure potentiality.

—Alfred North Whitehead

Both Jainism and Process describe the creative advance of creaturely life as one of becoming rather than being. Becoming is a verb and not a noun, an action that slips through the traditional philosophical categories of identity or difference. Becoming is the proto-ontological condition for all our ontological speculation—all our thoughts and words about what it means to live and be. Both creaturely cosmologies describe becoming as an intra-active coordination of two directions at once. For Process, the actual occasion is a unification of what Whitehead calls the temporal world of concrete happenings and the conceptual world of value, a term now emptied of its humanist exclusivity thanks to the generality of becoming. In Jainism, the *jīva* is the unification of what the second-century Jain scholar and monk Kundakunda called the *vyavahāra naya* and the *niścaya naya*, or the empirical standpoint and transcendent standpoint of omniscience.

While it may be tempting to think of the actual occasion or *jīva* as their own substance (especially for the *jīva* that Jains posit as unchanging), I contend that we must think of both as processes of unification, what I'm calling *direct intra-actions amid entanglements*—between two poles. What I mean is that the actual occasion and *jīva* do

not *do* an action. Rather, they *are* the intra-action between what is given and what is possible. As Nietzsche says, “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming . . . the deed is everything.”¹ Likewise, the actual occasion or *jīva* actualizes or territorializes a plane. Each becoming is nothing less than a new take on the world in a moment of creative and/or karmic self-determination, and as Deleuze asserts, “Becoming is always double.”²

This chapter examines the dual directions of becoming through which the actual occasion and *jīva* manifest their creative contribution to a universe-in-process. This direct intra-action amid entanglements takes place between the real world of concrete and karmically-bound life on the one hand, and an ideal potential on the other. Becoming between these two poles implies a modification of or *resistance* to the present through a de/re/territorializing of the status quo, a “reworlding,” as Donna Haraway calls it. Both the actual occasion and *jīva* grow in creaturely stature based on the excesses of feeling they can hold within their becoming. I will show how this two-fold architecture unifies *what was* with *what might be*, and how this unification is both bodily and conceptual, or real and ideal, before turning to contemporary examples of activists and theorists attempting to live between the poles. In Jainism, I will look at the debate over ahimsa, or nonviolence, between Gary Francione and Steve Best, utilizing the unlikely lens of Michel Foucault to understand ahimsa not as fixed principle but as a practice of freedom. In Process, I will examine the work of Donna Haraway as one who continually attempts the messy exercise of becoming like the actual occasion.

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1969), 45.

² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 109; hereafter WP.

1. The Jīva: Between the Empirical and Transcendent

The jīva manifests its creaturely contribution to reworlding between the two poles of empirical and transcendent perspectives. Kundakunda, the second-century Jain Digambara philosopher and mystic, described the interplay of the empirical and transcendent in the Jain text *Samayasāra*. In it, he emphasizes two crucial standpoints, or *nayas*, by which manifold reality can be viewed: the *vyavahāra naya*, which is the empirical standpoint of karmic exchange, and *niścaya naya*, which is the transcendent standpoint of omniscience. This two-fold dialectic corresponds to the fact that every life is composed of changing, or empirical, matter and unchanging, or transcendent, jīva—the Indian doublet of the Seer and the Seen. In the case of Jainism, every entity is a mixture of both.³ As I argued in the previous chapter, the Jain notion of transcendence is much closer to immanence in that the jīva is not an authoritarian outside, but a self-determining potential insisting from *within* the multiple intra-actions of life. Between the poles of these two perspectives, Kundakunda erects a “super-structure” by which he “views the empirical Self from [an] empirical standpoint,” called *vyavahāra*, and “the transcendental Self from the transcendental standpoint,”⁴ called *niścaya*.

The key to understanding these dual aspects of Jain karma is that each entity is an ongoing unification of both the empirical and transcendent, the changing real and persistent (or insistent) ideal. According to S. M. Shah’s research on Indian epistemology, Kundakunda’s dialectic represents a unique path by which the limitations

³ The pairing of Seer (*puruṣa*) and Seen (*prakṛti*) is prevalent in most schools of Indian thought, though each defines it differently. Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, and Yoga philosophy rely on these two aspects of reality and experience.

⁴ Shah, *The Dialectic of Knowledge*, 18.

of daily life are integrated with spirituality in a way that few other philosophers adopted.⁵ For example, Kundakunda admits the relational doctrines of Right perception, knowledge, and conduct, not as ends in themselves, but as necessary guides to navigate between one's current karmic circumstances and limitations and the potential of full-perception of the living multiplicity.⁶ "From the vyavahāra point of view," he states, "conduct, belief and knowledge are invaluable attributes (as different characteristics) of the Knower, the Self."⁷ Without these empirical disciplines and guides, it would be difficult to function and learn in a multi-faceted world. He explains, "Just as a non-Aryan (foreigner) cannot be made to understand anything except through the medium of his non-Aryan language, so the knowledge of the Absolute cannot be communicated to the ordinary people except through the vyavahāra point of view."⁸ Thus, the doctrines of relativity and epistemology play a necessary role for all entities navigating their path amid the empirical multiplicity. The jīva, as the "beautiful ideal in the whole universe,"⁹ feels the world through its empirical limitations and through its karmic adventures, and grows in perception and co-feeling toward its own fullest potential. The jīva is both the intra-active condition of increasing perception and the telos, or ideal aim, of karmic life. Learning the wisdom of those who have gone before, accessing different kinds of sensory knowledge, and experimenting with one's conduct are all essential tools for perceiving and caring for the dynamic potential within each creaturely life, including one's own.

⁵ Shah, *The Dialectic of Knowledge*, 20-21. Rather, two other very similar nayas, the *dravyārthika* and *paryāyārthika*, found prominence in Jain thought.

⁶ Śrī Kundakunda, *Samayasāra* 2, trans. A. Chakravarti (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanapitha, 2008), 181-84.

⁷ Śrī Kundakunda, *Samayasāra* 6-7, 191-98.

⁸ Śrī Kundakunda, *Samayasāra* 8, 198-201.

⁹ Śrī Kundakunda, *Samayasāra* 3, 185-87.

Kundakunda qualifies the vyavahāra naya as an incomplete perspective that must always interface with an abstract ideal of niścaya—or omniscience—in a possibility space that Kundakunda calls “the unitary sub-stratum.”¹⁰ This sub-stratum is the unifying coordination of the two-directions at once—an architecture of integration between a limited, relational empiricism and the possibility of relational omniscience. Omniscience or kevaljñān functions as a reachable ideal, but never in the sense of a final fixed knowledge. Rather, it implies full, but changing, comprehension of the dynamic totality of the entire cosmos in each karmically indeterminate moment. As described in the *Kalpa Sutra*:

When the Venerable Ascetic Mahāvīra had become a [Jina] . . . he was a Kevalin, omniscient and comprehending all objects; he knew and saw all conditions of the world, of gods, men, and demons: whence they come, whither they go, whether they are born as men or animals or become gods or hell-beings, the ideas, the thoughts of their minds, the food, doings, desires, the open and secret deeds of all the living beings in the whole world; he the Arhat, for whom there is no secret, knew and saw all conditions of all living beings in the world, what they thought, spoke, or did at any moment.¹¹

Omniscience is the complete and uninhibited prehension of the ongoing intra-play between empirical and transcendent, or between real and ideal, as it changes from moment to moment.

The visual depiction of the liberated jīva, called the *siddha*, gives further clarity to the mutual intra-play between these two perspectives. The image of the siddha is an outline of a body with the center cut out—a negative space, much like Deleuze and Guattari’s “body *without organs*”—that is identified not by any concrete manifestations

¹⁰ Śrī Kundakunda, *Samayasāra* 48, 237-38.

¹¹ *Kalpa Sūtra*, 5.121, trans. Hermann Georg Jacobi, in *Jaina Sutras: Part I and II* (1884; repr., [n. p.]: Forgotten Books, 2008), 208-9.

or attributes, but by its virtual potential and indeterminate identity.¹² The siddha shows the potential within every existent entity to exceed structural limitations of identity.

While the final form of a hollow, amorphous “human,” could still be construed as anthropocentric, the message expressed in the image of the liberated siddha is quite the opposite. As a virtual body, the image of the siddha is emptied of fixed identity beyond anthropocentrism to the entire cosmos. The empirical identity of “human,” is no less a limiting perspective than is any other identity. The ultimate aim is one of comprehensive co-feeling, not one of reinscribed or privileged identity.

Each jīva is at once actual *and* virtual, concrete *and* conceptual, bound to an actual network of karmic relations and the limitations of a bodily form, as well as unbound in the potential of feeling those, and all, relations more fully. This is true of every single jīva, even as it is exemplified in the siddha. The crucial aspect to remember is that our living multiplicity is populated by jīvas in constant intra-action between real relations and virtual potentials, provoked by the innumerable matrices of unprogrammed, non-conscious and extra-sensory karmic intra-actions with other bodies, or criss-crossing sets of flows, whether geological, biological, conceptual, or emotional. Just as the jīva is affected by the subtle physical weight of real karmic particles, so too is it influenced by its own virtual “body without organs,” its own ideal “permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles.”¹³ Omniscience is the virtual potential of a full perception of this mad and transitory multiplicity, not a repression or denial of it.

¹² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 40.

¹³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 40.

Shy of full omniscience, which is rare—even for so-called “humans”—varying degrees of this virtual comprehension are possible in the ongoing process of becoming, breaking through limitations of identity, mind, or reason. Increased comprehension extends to extra-sensory perception or physical feelings with the multiplicity of karmic perceptions and indeterminate modes of exchange. Right perception, right knowledge, and right conduct are each unifications between the empirical and transcendent, the real and ideal, the actual and virtual. In the becoming of the *jīva*, both poles are mutually required in a unitary sub-stratum, a dual-directional architecture of direct intra-action amid empirical and transcendent entanglements that Jains express as *ahimsa*.

1.1. Animal liberation and ahimsa

As the Jain diaspora spreads throughout the world, more people are learning about and engaging this tradition as well as its concept of *ahimsa*, a word typically defined as “nonviolence,” though “noninterference” is a subtle but significant alternative translation. Some find the commitments to vegetarianism and nonharm inspiring while others find it impossible and impractical. The Jain practice of *ahimsa* has played a minor role in a drawn-out war of words between Steve Best and animal law professor/vegan activist Gary Francione. Francione, due in part to his commitment to Jain *ahimsa*, advocates an abolitionist approach to animal use, meaning the complete cessation of all instrumental uses of animal life. He maintains that he is “violently opposed to violence,”¹⁴ “including

¹⁴ Gary L. Francione, “A Comment on Violence,” *Animal Rights: The Abolitionist Approach*, entry posted August 13, 2007, <http://www.abolitionistapproach.com/a-comment-on-violence/> (accessed September 20, 2012).

violence against property”¹⁵ in the animal rights movement. Francione rejects any notion that violent means can produce meaningful ends. “I regard violence as the problem and not as any part of the solution,” he asserts, “and I encourage those who are concerned about animal exploitation to go vegan and to engage in creative, non-violent vegan education.”¹⁶ For Francione, violent systems of animal exploitation like vivisection or factory farming exist “because it is we, the consumers, who create the demand for animal products.”¹⁷ He continues, “The solution is education to shift the moral paradigm . . . as far as I am concerned, animal rights and ethical veganism represent a commitment to non-violence.”¹⁸

On the other hand, Best, with his endorsement of direct action, disagrees with what he sees as Francione’s “extreme pacifism” that rejects all forms of direct animal liberation, property damage, or confrontations with investors. It is not so much ahimsa that is under scrutiny, but the way it functions in Francione’s overall platform, “vilifying sabotage tactics as ‘violent,’” or “conflating attacks on property with assaults on people,” that, for Best, serves only to reinforce the reactionary, criminalizing discourses that label these acts of capitalist resistance as “terrorism.”¹⁹ Best is also critical that “dogmatic pacifists” ignore the concrete changes brought about by direct action—not only for

¹⁵ Gary L. Francione, “Hey, Is That Milk On Your Balaclava?” *Animal Rights: The Abolitionist Approach*, entry posted September 1, 2009, <http://www.abolitionistapproach.com/hey-is-that-milk-on-your-balaclava/> (accessed September 21, 2012).

¹⁶ Francione, “Milk On Your Balaclava” (blog).

¹⁷ Francione, “Milk On Your Balaclava” (blog).

¹⁸ Francione, “Milk On Your Balaclava” (blog).

¹⁹ Steve Best, “Manifesto for Radical Abolitionism: By Any Means Necessary,” *Animal Liberation Front*, entry posted November 13, 2009, <http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/Manifesto-TotalLib.htm> (accessed August 2, 2012).

numerous animals freed from captivity, invasive procedures, and death, but also to the economic base of exploitative companies. Best sees Francione's nonviolent abolitionist approach as tilted toward vegan education and individualistic change alone without addressing any of the other social, racial, economic, or political influences that contribute to the global rise in animal and earth exploitation. "Despite some talk of capitalism, commonalities of oppression, and alliance politics," Best writes,

Francione ultimately pushes a simplistic, single-issue 'go vegan' approach pitched to a white, affluent, privileged, Western audience, with no intent to engage people of color, working class families, the poor, or China and India, the world's most populous nations now in rapid transition from maintaining traditional plant-based diets to embracing Western diets rooted in consuming 'animal products' including flesh, milk, and eggs.²⁰

Charlotte Laws has made some attempt to locate the practice of ahimsa between these oppositional camps. In 2006, she argued that while Jains might not participate in direct action with groups like Animal Liberation Front (ALF) or Earth Liberation Front (ELF), they still pose a threat to the status quo. "Jains, the ALF, and the ELF are admirably radical," Laws writes, in that all three communities:

step outside the conventional, anthropocentric paradigm to prioritize the interests and needs of animals and the environment. Unlike most of their contemporaries, they have an expanded moral vision, holding that nonhuman living beings have interests and inherent value, apart from their usefulness to people.²¹

But later, in a 2011 article after a trip to the large Jain temple in Southern California, her enthusiasm seems to wilt, admitting "No Jain that I met was willing to abandon their

²⁰ Best, "Manifesto for Radical Abolitionism" (blog).

²¹ Charlotte Laws, "Jains, the ALF, and the ELF: Antagonists or Allies?" in *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth*, ed. Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella II (Oakland: AK Press, 2006) 146.

composed inner world for direct action.”²² The Jain ideal was to “set a good example, lead the most ascetic lifestyle that’s pragmatically possible, maintain a nonviolent mindset, and refrain from personally causing harm to living beings . . . ”²³ Laws deduced that “Withdrawal from the world, and the non-confrontational Jain philosophy,” relegated Jains to the ethical sidelines.²⁴

So how do we approach these antagonistic readings of ahimsa? On the one hand Francione holds it up as an immutable principle, and on the other Best and a disappointed Laws are frustrated by this principle’s lack of applicability and scope. If we are to understand how ahimsa might function for animal and planetary liberation, we have to understand how ahimsa fits into the creaturely cosmology of Jainism, not as a dogmatic requirement, but as a direct action between the competing claims of a given multiplicity and the virtual potential to perceive that multiplicity more fully, even—as I will discuss in the next chapter—without loss. As such, I contend that ahimsa is not an immutable principle, but an experimental practice—a direct intra-action amid real and virtual entanglements. Jains describes ahimsa, not as a fixed law, but as the “science of peace”²⁵ or the highest dharma. The word “dharma” itself has a plethora of meaning across a variety of Indian traditions. Even within Jainism, dharma describes the Three Jewels, the fundamental character of existence, the ten virtues of Daslakshan,²⁶ the two-fold path of

²² Charlotte Laws, “The Jain Center of Southern California: Theory and Practice Across Continents,” in *Call to Compassion: Religious Perspectives on Animal Advocacy*, ed. Lisa Kemmerer and Anthony J. Nocella II (New York: Lantern Books, 2011), 58.

²³ Laws, “The Jain Center,” 54.

²⁴ Laws, “The Jain Center,” 54.

²⁵ Surendra Bothra, *Ahimsa: The Science of Peace* (1987; repr., Jaipur: Prakrit Bharati Academy, 2008).

²⁶ Daslakshan Parva, or the festival of ten virtues, is an aspect of the annual Paryushan festival celebrated by the Digambar Jains for self-development and spiritual

monastics and lay Jains, as well as the medium of motion that is paired with the medium of rest (*adharma*). So the fact that ahimsa is named the highest dharma among these does not necessarily clarify the term into a rule whose application is self-evident.

In spite of its slippery definition, ahimsa maintains a comprehensive and general scope. According to Mahāvīra, ahimsa applies “among the zealots and the not zealous, among the faithful and the not faithful, among the not cruel and the cruel, among those who have worldly weakness and those who have not.”²⁷ Thus, ahimsa is not posited as a law that everyone assents to, but is described in the *Tattvārtha* and *Acārāṅga Sūtras* as a “reciprocal regard,” that immanently unifies the empirical world of limitation and the transcendent ideal of unimpeded perception, *vyavahāra naya* and *niścaya naya*.²⁸ Whether one assents or not, the *jīva* is the activation of ahimsa as an embodied and conceptual bridge between the real and ideal, a dual-directional architecture unified in none other than becoming life itself.

1.2. Ahimsa as practices of freedom

The liberated, omniscient *siddha* functions as a rare, but reachable ideal in Jain philosophy. The sutras explain that it is possible to achieve omniscience while alive, meaning that one *can be* omniscient but not yet liberated, still burning off the last vestiges of karma. But the liberated *siddha*, unbound by karma, is synonymous with omniscience. In either case, omniscience is a rare and remarkable achievement that stands

uplift. This is a time of observing ten universal virtues, such as asking for forgiveness, practicing simplicity, and restraint, all of which aim for the edification of the soul’s cosmic citizenship.

²⁷ *Acārāṅga Sūtra* 1.4.1, trans. Hermann Georg Jacobi, in *Jaina Sutras: Part I and II* (1884; repr., [n. p.]: Forgotten Books, 2008), 56.

²⁸ *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 1.9-12, trans. Manu Doshi (Ahmedabad, India: Shrut Ratnakar, 2007), 21; *Acārāṅga Sūtra* 1.3.3, 53.

as an inspiring ideal that the majority of living Jains treat exactly as such—as a living ideal that informs, but does not oppressively dominate their life. To put it another way, the virtual potential of omniscience is not a tyrannical demand, but a provocative lure toward experiments in expansive perception and careful living. According to Jain cosmology, liberation is not even possible for any jīva for approximately the next 40,000 years, as we are in an epochal downturn (*avasarpini*) of dwindling understanding and compassion.²⁹ I mention this because it points to the unique cosmological orientation within Jainism that includes an immense scope of time and innumerable lifetimes through which one traces a karmic path. Unlike the urgent political present of the west that attempts to lay normative ethical claims on all bodies, Jainism recognizes the unique, and non-linear path—of all becoming jīvas. Each is at its own point on the journey and thus no one-size-fits-all notion of nonviolence is adequate. For this reason, it is all the more important to understand ahimsa not as an immutable principle, but as a bodily and conceptual bridge for each jīva between the present and alternative futures. The fact that mokṣa cannot be reached any time soon does not dissuade Jains from acting toward the fullness of that possibility. On the contrary, in a cosmos where, as Whitehead says, “life is robbery,” the Jain way of life is the continuous attempt to minimize that theft through increasing perception and co-feeling.

²⁹ Jainism posits time as infinite, without any beginning or end. Time is divided in time cycles (Kalchakras). Every time cycle is further sub-divided in two equal halves. The first half is the progressive cycle or ascending order, called Utsarpini (*susma*). The other half is the regressive cycle or the descending order, called Avasarpini (*duṣma*). See Śrī Jnānamatī Mātājī, *Jaina Bharatī: The Essence of Jainism* (Hastinapur: Digambar Jain Institute of Cosmographic Research, 2007), 2; Jainworld, “Time Cycle,” <http://www.jainworld.com/education/juniors/junles11.htm> (accessed January 14, 2013).

Monastics are the living examples of restraining one's personal desires so that the desires of a broader swath of life might flourish. It is not a question of one *versus* the many, or part *versus* whole. In a universe of karmic entanglements, the well-being of all is immanently bound together, through past and present intra-actions. The ascetic impulse of renunciation is often misunderstood primarily as a denunciation of or escape from the changing world. However, restraining one's desires, as well as the power exercised to satisfy those desires, can also be an affirmation of the world.

Foucault, one of the preeminent theorists of power, suggests, "In the abuse of power, one exceeds the legitimate exercise of one's power and imposes one's fantasies, appetites, and desires on others . . . such a man is the slave of his appetites."³⁰ The Jain vows aim at freeing oneself from a limited conception of personal desire toward a fuller co-feeling of satisfaction. Personal desire and the thriving of the impersonal cosmos are not antagonistic oppositions, but constitutive aspects of each jīva. Syādvāda is an example of this on a verbal level, as it aims to undermine one-sided assertions by coordinating them with competing claims into an increasingly capacious understanding. Similarly, numerous Jain texts emphasize controlling one's senses so as not to run roughshod over life that does not conform to our limited perceptions. The *Sutrakṛtaṅga* states, "Master of one's senses and avoiding wrong, one should do no harm to any life, neither by thoughts, nor words, nor acts."³¹ The *Acārāṅga Sutra* asserts that "Correctly understanding the law [that all existing creatures hate pains and should not be tormented]

³⁰ Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Brooklyn, NY: Semiotext[e], 1996), 438.

³¹ *Sutrakṛtaṅga* 1.11.12, trans. Hermann Georg Jacobi, in *Jaina Sutras: Part I and II* (1884; repr., [n. p.]: Forgotten Books, 2008), 462.

one should arrive at indifference for the impressions of the senses and ‘not act on the motives of the world.’”³² Ahimsa takes this to a cosmological plane, not as a negative prohibition of “thou shalt not injure,” but as an embodied and conceptual reversal of the diminished sensitivities characterizing dominant culture. Ahimsa is an invitation to new forms of perceptive excess.

Foucault again offers an unexpected insight here when he reevaluates power relations, not in terms of “processes of liberation,” but in terms of “practices of freedom.”³³ Foucault is critical of the notion of liberation because, “one runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature or base that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic and social processes, has been concealed, alienated or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression.”³⁴ He continues,

According to this hypothesis, all that is required is to break these repressive deadlocks and man will be reconciled with himself, rediscover his nature or regain contact with his origin, and reestablish a full and positive relation with himself . . . I am not trying to say that liberation as such . . . does not exist: when a colonized people attempts to liberate itself from its colonizers, this is indeed a practice of liberation in the strict sense. But we know very well . . . that this practice of liberation is not in itself sufficient to define the practices of freedom that will still be needed if this people, this society and these individuals, are to be able to define admissible and acceptable forms of existence . . .³⁵

It is important to note that Foucault himself would likely not have included plants and animals in these practices of freedom given his exclusive focus on humanist discourses and power relations. But creaturely cosmologies and their advocates are not

³² *Acārāṅga Sūtra* 1.4.1-3.

³³ Foucault, “Ethics,” 433.

³⁴ Foucault, “Ethics,” 433.

³⁵ Foucault, “Ethics,” 433.

bound by Foucault's ontological limitations.³⁶ And his point remains helpful in elucidating the kind of liberation this project does and does not aim at. As described by Best in the second chapter, the goal of animal liberation philosophy is not merely to free one population from its cage as though in a relational vacuum, but rather the goal is "total liberation and revolutionary transformation"³⁷ at the level of ontology, economy, politics, and ecology. Creaturely cosmologies do not posit liberation *only* as a sudden breaking of the chains (although such moments can have major impacts on the zeitgeist of an age), but as an ongoing process of greater co-feeling that gradually overrides exclusion. The purpose of liberation in creaturely cosmologies is not to reperform fixed identities, but to affirm and liberate the multiplicity of life into zones of indistinction toward unprogrammed futures that can undermine the normative structures and discourses of the status quo.

Foucault's distinction between liberation and practices of freedom also illuminate the difference between Francione's understanding of ahimsa as an immutable principle to be applied in every animal-oriented situation equally, and a counter-reading that I propose. This counter-reading is not only more reflective of the breadth of Jain metaphysics, but also flexible and comprehensive enough to contribute to a broader and less programmatic notion of liberation that demands the opening of cages as well as conceptual strongholds that currently hinder genuine reworldings co-created by the direct intra-actions of all creaturely life.

³⁶ See, for example, Clare Palmer, "Taming the Wild Profusion of Existing Things?: A Study of Foucault, Power, and Human/Animal Relationships," *Environmental Ethics* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 339-358.

³⁷ Best, "Manifesto for Radical Abolitionism" (blog).

Much as the empirical entanglements of Jain karma are the condition for greater transcendent perception and feeling, Foucault does not envision a world that is ever totally without power relations. “This is precisely a failure to see that power relations are not something that is bad in itself, that we have to break free of.”³⁸ The challenge is not to deny the impact we have on one another, or our ability to provoke and persuade other’s behavior, “but to acquire . . . the management techniques . . . the *ethos*, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible.”³⁹ As Foucault claims, “Liberation paves the way for new power relations, which must be controlled with practices of freedom.”⁴⁰ Ahimsa is, I argue, nothing but an experimental practice of freedom. Ahimsa in the ongoing attempt to unify a number of past and present entanglements with as little domination as possible. The aim is to proliferate liberties in a moment, not to close them down.

In Jainism, of course, this extends to every jīva, another reason why Francione’s understanding of ahimsa is too narrow to support the “post-hierarchical worldviews” that Best deems necessary for planetary transformation. In a recent debate with plant ethicist Michael Marder, Francione adamantly opposed Marder’s research-based claim that plants have nonconscious perception and sensitivity of their environment. Because Francione rejects any form of plant perception, he concludes that “they have no interests . . . they cannot desire, or want, or prefer anything.”⁴¹ He continues:

³⁸ Foucault, “Ethics,” 446.

³⁹ Foucault “Ethics,” 446.

⁴⁰ Foucault “Ethics,” 434.

⁴¹ Gary L. Francione and Michael Marder, “Michael Marder and Gary Francione Debate Plant Ethics,” Columbia University Press, [n. d.], <http://www.cup.columbia.edu/static/marder-francione-debate> (accessed August 1, 2012).

Although I am in many respects sympathetic to Jain ethics, and particular [*sic*] to the notion that we should never engage in intentional violence against sentient beings, I do not share the Jain notion that plants and microscopic organisms, because they are alive, have souls. You really need that sort of approach to start to make sense of [Marder's] position.⁴²

Marder cautions against attempts to “translate animal and human sensorium into the sentience of plants” and reasserts that plants can, in fact, “engage in nonconscious determination of the course of their growth, above and below the ground.”⁴³ However, Francione's theoretical framework leaves no space for this kind of data that presses against limited notions of empiricism. As a legal scholar and ethicist, Francione's position is constructed upon an intractable rights-based humanism that limits him only to a pragmatic, moral, ethical, and political inclusion based on identity or difference. Life that falls outside these parameters simply cannot be theorized. For Francione, ahimsa applies only to humans and to some animals, a very clean bifurcation of who counts while de-realizing all that does not. Francione does not recognize plants as creative or karmic partners. It is not clear even that Francione sees animals in terms of their self- and world-shaping potential as much as vulnerable bodies in need of paternalistic protections.

This narrow understanding of humanist sentiency may work strategically to extend rights to animals and indirectly aid in their liberation from the physical cages they currently endure. But at what expense? We pull a creature out from a cage only to shove the entire universe back in its place, reducing it to mere reflex and response? And what are creatures then liberated to? Even if they are protected from violence, a humanist rights framework keeps them subjugated to an anthropocentric hierarchy of childlike naiveté and vulnerability. This approach cannot undermine the metaphysical foundations

⁴² Francione and Marder, “Plant Ethics.”

⁴³ Francione and Marder, “Plant Ethics.”

that justify the continued de-realization and exploitation of the “nonhuman” world. We are still in need of the practices of freedom Foucault describes.

Although Francione considers himself a serious Jain scholar, his understanding of ahimsa gives only a partial representation of Jain philosophy. He disregards the perceptive capacity of plant life by dismissing the Jain soul as an unempirical religious postulation, and thus he also rejects the Jain theory of reincarnation to which the practice of ahimsa is intractably bound. By reducing the jīva to a doctrine of *belief*, Francione can keep the notion of ahimsa as a secular ethical tool devoid of its metaphysical baggage. But ahimsa is inseparable from that baggage and removing it from its context is a bit like proof-texting in the Bible. Ahimsa functions as an essential part of Jainism’s metaphysical architecture as a coordinated practice within and between lives that undermines exactly the kind of one-sided anthropocentric ethics that Francione proposes. Ahimsa is not a doctrine that applies only to some fixed categories of life. Rather, it is the practice of freedom that unifies every intra-active becoming with the broader universe of perceptive, processive creatures, however strange and different they may be. Ahimsa is a direct intra-action aimed at proliferating all these liberties, not denying or limiting them. The science of peace is a two-sided bridge between what is and what might be in every becoming. Ahimsa is always the direct intra-action of a jīva processing toward fuller perception and deeper experiences of the multiplicity.

In closing this section, consider this passage from the *Sutrakṛtāṅga*:

A man who guards his soul and subdues his senses, should never assent to anybody killing beings . . . He should not say that it is meritorious, because he ought to save those beings, whether they move or not, which are killed for the sake of making a gift. Nor should he say that it is not meritorious, because he would then prevent those for whose sake the food and drink in question is prepared, to get their due . . . a pious man shows an island to the beings which are

carried away by the (flood of samsāra) and suffer for their deeds. This place of safety has been proclaimed (by the Tīrthankaras).⁴⁴

The layers of this passage are complex and gesture toward the perplexing reversal that Long mentions. It challenges anyone who would dismiss ahimsa as idealistic or escapist, or minimize its application to only some portion of the living multiplicity. This passage describes actions that unify the given circumstances toward an alternative vision, an island of refuge, like the promise of an oasis in the desert.

In subduing our senses or desires, one gains greater co-feeling with diverse modes of empirical perception that exist in the vyavahāra naya. The direct intra-action explained in this passage is paradoxically an explicit resistance to and prevention of killing that does not get caught up in normative claims of merit or shame. The action coordinates what is given toward what is possible. Such actions are the heart of direct intra-action since they challenge the status quo with an alternative that can inspire the possibilities of others.

Right perception is a proto-ontological affirmation of karmic entanglements and omniscient potential. Right knowledge is the exercise of various modes of increasing perceptivity between one's limited point of view amid entanglements and the potential for uninhibited perception of the multiplicity. Ahimsa, as right action, is the experimental practice of freedom between the two poles—a direct intra-action between a reality of karmic cost and the virtual island where safety is assured in the ultimate perception that feels all life without loss.

⁴⁴ *Sutrakṛtāṅga* 1.11.16-23, 463.

2. The Actual Occasion: Between the Concrete and the Conceptual

Having worked through the dual-directionality of the becoming jīva, I will now turn to the actual occasion that manifests itself between the two directions of the temporal world of concrete fact and the conceptual world of value. Before we get there, I want to revisit the architecture of the actual occasion. As described in Chapter Three, becoming is the novel moment of self-construction in which the actual occasion coordinates, or prehends, a given past with the mental grasping toward a potential future. The actual occasion describes an event, and like the best parties or most memorable encounters, those boundaries are not marked out beforehand. One only knows afterward the contours of that remarkable day, that perfect storm of happenings, the night where time seemed to stand still. The boundaries of an experience that is somehow more than the sum of its parts only become apparent through the happening. But how? What makes those parts, not only come together in a new way, but also achieve an intensity of feeling that sets the event apart? This is exactly what Whitehead was trying to answer for every aspect of experiential becoming. Every actual occasion is an event with some degree of intensity.

In an attempt to understand the strange and unfamiliar process of the actual occasion and its capacity for what Whitehead calls “non-sensuous perception,” Process scholar Steven Meyer describes the architecture of an occasion in terms of the “specious present,” a term used by William James in a chapter on the perception of time within his *Principles of Psychology*.⁴⁵ Not long after, Gertrude Stein, likely influenced by

⁴⁵ William James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), Classics in the History of Psychology, <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/James/Principles/prin15.htm>, (accessed online January 2, 2012), 609. This term was used by William James but coined by E. R. Clay.

Whitehead's insistence to "take time seriously,"⁴⁶ investigated the notion of *duration*—or the time-sense she had when she was writing⁴⁷—calling it the "the prolonged present," or "the continuous present,"⁴⁸ that moment that includes an impossible abundance of happenings, yet seems to stand still. James elucidates this term, also referring to it as "the practically cognized present," explaining how we experience a typical moment:

the practically cognized present is no knife-edge, but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look in two directions into time. The unit of composition of our perception of time is a *duration*, with a bow and a stern, as it were – a rearward – and a forward-looking end.⁴⁹

The architecture of the actual occasion-as-specious present is such that two directions are not felt as a succession, first feeling the past followed by the future. Rather, "The experience is from the outset a synthetic datum . . . and to sensible perception its elements are inseparable, although attention looking back may easily decompose the experience, and distinguish its beginning from its end."⁵⁰ The breadth of the occasion takes place between the two directions of beginning and end, or past and future, the given parts and how they might become. The stature of the occasion depends on how much can be held in that duration of "concrete togetherness" that defines the specious present and

⁴⁶ Alfred North Whitehead, "Time," *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1927); reprinted in *Interpretations of Science*, ed. A. H. Johnson (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), 240.

⁴⁷ Claudia Franken, *Gertrude Stein: Writer and Thinker* (Munster: LIT Verlag, 2000), 154.

⁴⁸ Steven Meyer, "'Jamesian Modernism: The Future in The Present,'" (paper, Whitehead: The Next Generation Conference, Claremont, CA, December 1-3, 2011), 33. Also see Steven Meyer, *Robust Empiricisms: Jamesian Modernism Between the Disciplines, 1878-Present*, vol. 1 (forthcoming).

⁴⁹ James, *Principles*, 609.

⁵⁰ James, *Principles*, 610.

the “production of novelty” that Whitehead calls the actual occasion.⁵¹ When you think of those timeless moments in your own life, how much did they hold?

I imagine it like an experiment of trying to see how many people will fit in a Volkswagen Beetle. I imagine the party where the door remains open for another guest and another and another, each more diverse than the last, until the crowd is massive in size and impossible in scope. I imagine it like the permeable boundaries of our nation in which we receive another stranger, another culture, and another language into this massive event that is the United States. I imagine it like a dream that holds the most contradictory elements that yet makes perfect sense in that disjunctive state. I imagine it like a local shelter that always has room for one more weary traveler no matter the hour.

Bernard Loomer, a Process theologian, explained the precarious balance of this fullness as the “stature” or “size” of an occasion, referring to the “ability to absorb more and more dimensions of the world in the unity of your own being and add to the stature of your soul.”⁵² He goes on:

How much of the other can you incorporate into your being? How many of the contrasts and contradictions of life can you take in without being disorganized, thrown, or broke? Size is increased by the number and intensity of the contrasts that you attempt to unify within yourself. The greater the range and depth of contrasts that you attempt to synthesize into your unity, the larger the Size of your spirit.⁵³

The words “incorporate” and “absorb” are unfortunate as they have tones of assimilation or take over. But if we think Loomer’s statement alongside the *jīva*, we can

⁵¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Gifford Lectures, 1927-28, corr. ed., ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 21; hereafter PR.

⁵² Bernard Loomer, “Process Theology: Origins, Strengths, Weaknesses,” *Process Studies Journal* 16, no. 4 (1987): 252.

⁵³ Loomer, “Process Theology,” 252.

think this “stature” in terms of the growing perception toward omniscience, or Whitehead’s prehension of the multiplicity. How much can we or the actual occasion “become with” or welcome in our prehension? The duration of the actual occasion, or of any event, is not a directive to sacrifice oneself to overwhelming contrasts. It is, however, a helpful way to reflect on what contrasts are excluded or evaluated out in order to maintain a persistent identity. It also reminds us how we assimilate other life in the basic functions of eating, drinking, breathing, and moving. As Jainism recognizes in its karmic calculations, and as Whitehead makes clear, “Whether or no it be for the general good, life is robbery. It is at this point that with life morals become acute. The robber requires justification” (PR 105). In a world in which life requires life, creaturely cosmologies demonstrate through increasing stature how all occasions and events might minimize that theft through “becoming with,” through a wider co-feeling, a more spacious, perceptive duration. But to what end?

2.1. A becoming-idea

In an essay called “Mathematics and the Good,” one of the last publications in Whitehead’s career, he describes how every becoming is a two-sided unification between two worlds—one temporal and one conceptual. Every “idea” like a line, point, or number is two-sided in that it refers to something abstract and it is also applied in an actual situation. The actual employment of a shape or figure only makes sense in relation to a “background which is the unbounded Universe.”⁵⁴ A number assists in a given context because of its relation to the imagined infinitude of things. The same holds true for all ideas, that are, at base, nothing but events. The notion of “good” for example is made

⁵⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, “Mathematics and the Good,” in *Essays in Science and Philosophy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 101; hereafter MG.

manifest in a concrete happening. And that happening takes on the timeless aspect of goodness, “adding the perception of worth and beauty to the mere transition of sense-experience” (MG 105). In a companion essay called “Immortality,” Whitehead describes the two worlds unified within an idea as the World of Fact and the World of Value, much like Kundakunda’s vyavahāra and niścaya naya. In the World of Fact, action, finitude, and mortality depict “Real happenings” or “finite entities,” characterized by activity that originates in the present, the ongoing changes that we see all around us.⁵⁵ In the World of Value, importance, infinity, immortality are characterized as conceptual abstractions that are persistent and nontemporal, not rooted in passing circumstance.

But in reality, the two worlds cannot be held separately. They only make sense together. Whitehead asserts that, “infinitude is mere vacancy apart from its embodiment of finite values, and that finite entities are meaningless apart from their relationship beyond themselves” (MG 106). “The crux of philosophy,” writes Whitehead, “is to retain the balance between individuality of existence and relativity of existence” (MG 111). In *Modes of Thought*, he describes this two-fold intra-action as the “miraculous balance,” achieved in great works of art. “The whole displays its component parts, each with its own value enhanced,” he explains, “and the parts lead up to the a whole, which is beyond themselves, and yet not destructive of themselves.”⁵⁶ Again, we see how the relational matrix and the agential individual cannot be separated. Whitehead reconceived this mutual requirement with the help of none other than Plato himself, whose ideal forms

⁵⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, “Immortality,” in *Essays in Science and Philosophy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 79; hereafter IMM.

⁵⁶ Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 62.

have been traditionally seen as the example of fixed, subjugating transcendence par excellence in western thought.

In revisiting Plato's work, Whitehead finds a variety of strains seeking to express the "mutual immanence of actualities."⁵⁷ In the *Timaeus*, Plato refers to this as the *khora*, or "Receptacle," and elsewhere, "Space," "natural matrix of all things," or "fostermother of all becoming . . ." (AI 134). Whitehead finds in the *khora* resonances with Lucretius's *Void* or Leibniz's notion of God, which, like the Jain *siddha*, is a virtual "body without organs" that defines a Law that is paradoxically relational and perceptive, a mutually requiring "medium of intercommunication" (AI 134).

The Worlds of Fact and Value fuse together *within* every becoming in what Faber calls "manifolds in mutual immanence," where " . . . universality and relativity . . . time, space, ideality . . . extension, and creativity are expressions of their mutual and universal incompleteness."⁵⁸ Like Bohr's reciprocal definability described in the first chapter, the Worlds of Fact and Value require one another, refuting any privilege of one over the other. Faber continues, "[mutual immanence] is a *critical* notion that, in refuting any transcendence of categories and principles, denies anything the status of origin, ground, aim, or goal beyond the nexus of happening itself. It is anti-hierarchical!"⁵⁹

This is not to say that there is no place for order in a processive cosmos. On the contrary, as I mentioned in Chapter Three, the becoming occasion — as well as the nexus

⁵⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (1933; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1967), 134; hereafter AI.

⁵⁸ Roland Faber, "Immanence and Incompleteness: Whitehead's Late Metaphysics," in *Beyond Metaphysics?: Explorations in Alfred North Whitehead's Late Thought*, ed. Roland Faber, Brian Henning, and Clinton Combs (New York: Rodopi, 2010), 103.

⁵⁹ Faber, "Immanence," 104.

and society—each describe a mode of evaluation and ordering. For a single actual occasion, this evaluation is relatively flat. However, nexuses and societies—like plants, animals, the Great Pyramid, ecosystems, books, and you and me—develop by ordering complex aggregates of input in their own “style” of becoming. Much of this ordering is involuntary and nonconscious and yet formative to continuity amid change. For example, my own existence is the result of a multiplicity of occasions, cells, neurons, electrons, germs, and bacteria ordered individually and constitutively in the mind-body complex I consider “me.” Should any of these occasions or nexuses suddenly devolve into complete disorder—jumping the spacetime continuum for example—the consequences for “me” would be potentially disastrous. Order and evaluative importance is essential to the development of new intensities that are not destructive of themselves. The two poles of fact and value are not predicated on everything in the universe being absolutely flat and undifferentiated. On the contrary, the two poles preserve the intra-play of personal order and virtual potential. The intensity of each nexus and society depends on evaluation, order, and even hierarchy. But it is precisely the intra-action with the ideal and boundless pole of value, immortality, omniscience, or virtual potential folding back into these hierarchical valuations that keep them mutable, unfixed, and changing. Order and hierarchy are essential to the complex diversity of life we see around us, but this order is continuously destabilized through the dual-directionality of becoming. And much like the Jain siddha, the complex order of a nexus or society enables modes of feeling beyond and subversive of narrow personal identity.

In every becoming, Whitehead preserves both the concrete fact of order that gives rise to novel identity in a certain spatio-temporal context as well as the virtual value

unlimited by the boundaries of time, space, or identity. With full awareness of the bodied manifestation of each actual occasion, Whitehead thus calls the intra-action of the two poles an “idea,” a bridge between “a shape of value and a shape of fact” (IMM 64). He explains, “When we enjoy ‘realized value,’ we are experiencing the essential junction of the two worlds. But when we emphasize mere fact, or mere possibility we are making an abstraction in thought” (IMM 64). He continues,

When we enjoy fact as the realization of specific value, or possibility as an impulse towards realization, we are then stressing the ultimate character of the Universe. This ultimate character has two sides—one side in the mortal world of transitory fact acquiring the immortality of realized value; and the other side is the timeless world of mere possibility acquiring temporal realization. The bridge between the two is the ‘idea’ with its two sides (IMM 64-65).

Here we see the dual aspect of becoming in all its multiplicity. The actual occasion creates itself out of the both fact and value, finitude and infinity, mortality and immortality, enacting a coordination of both, lending realized value to passing fact, and giving tangible shape to pure possibility. Within these becoming-ideas, according to Deleuze and Guattari, “Infinite movement is double . . .” expressions of both “being and thinking,” of “Thought and as Nature,” of “*Nous* and as *Physis*” in the same duration of “instantaneous exchange—a lightning flash” so that “the plane of immanence is ceaselessly being woven, like a gigantic shuttle . . .” (WP 38). In becoming-ideas, “Every movement passes through the whole plane of immanence by immediately turning back on and folding itself and also by folding other movements or allowing itself to be folded by them, giving rise to retroactions, connections, and proliferations in the fractalization of this infinitely folded up infinity . . .” as a single plane of “pure variation” (WP 38-39). Two movements are immanently folding and refolding into and out of every becoming-idea.

It is important to pause briefly to clarify that becoming-ideas play a different role in Deleuze and Guattari than they do in Whitehead. I use their work here for its descriptive power in spite of theoretical limitations. Deleuze is more concerned with what he calls “pure concepts,” or “conceptual personae”—expressions of immanence that are not “immanent to an transcendent,” (WP 47) or “Figure” (WP 66). His “ideas” are not bound to the limits of composition, evolution, service, affect, perception, or even “thought.” Rather they point to an “image of thought” (WP 66) that “makes the whole of language stammer,” that de/re/territorializes existing maps of home, place, identity, and knowledge (WP 69). “Ideas” are the “internal conditions” for the real exercise of thought, Deleuze calls them “seeds of thought,” (WP 69) that “proliferate and branch off, jostle one another and replace each other,” a purely immanent and “dynamic difference” that does not serve an overarching Tree, however shady, mutual, and benign (WP 71). Ideas become expressions of pure immanence.

But in Whitehead, becoming ideas are also embodied events, intra-acting with transcendent ideals in a way that Deleuze’s do not need to. Nevertheless, I utilize Deleuze and Guattari’s phrasing insofar as it illuminates the dual-directionality of every actual occasion, every process of becoming, and thus every becoming-idea. As Shaviro puts it, “For Whitehead, there is no ontological difference between what we generally call physical objects and what we generally call mental or subjective acts.”⁶⁰ Thus, every becoming-idea is an event that is simultaneously the “creation of concepts and the instituting of the plane . . . ,” a double-sided bridge between fact and value that reconfigures both (WP 41).

⁶⁰ Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 21.

This is the plane that philosophy takes as a given, according to Deleuze. All our thoughts and frameworks start with concepts, which themselves are dependent on the non-conceptual, prephilosophical, and proto-ontological plane of immanence — “thought and that which cannot be thought” — described in the dual-infinite movements of the creaturely actual occasion, events of becoming too fluid and fractalized to be sedimented in any concept (WP 59).

“Prephilosophical does not mean something preexistent,” asserts Deleuze,” but rather something *that does not exist outside philosophy*, although philosophy presupposes it. These are its internal conditions” (WP 41). The pre-philosophical is paradoxically excluded from and de-realized by philosophy even as philosophy depends on it for its existence. Moving into the proto-ontological plane is thus also the direction for altering and troubling philosophy, for stretching its concepts and functions to resist the present with fresh retroactions and reconfigurations. “The creation of concepts,” claims Deleuze, “calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist,” emerging minorities that challenge democratic, capitalist, and conceptual majorities (WP 108).

The connection to philosophies of animal liberation should be coming clearer. Every creaturely becoming is also a becoming-idea in that it is both actual and conceptual, real and ideal at the same instant, and this intra-action destabilizes and re/territorializes the physical world and the conceptual realm. Thus when Whitehead proclaims that “we have to bend our energies to the enunciation of adequate concepts,” we know he is not only envisioning a speech

act, but an embodied and conceptual resistance to the status quo.⁶¹ Per Deleuze, “a becoming is by its nature that which always eludes the majority,” which is to say that becoming-idea invites us to become-with in unprogrammed ways, welcoming in what has been excluded, responding to provocations too long ignored (WP 108). To put it another way “ . . . [I]t is from immanence that a breach is expected” (WP 47). The resistance insists *within* intra-actions.

Deleuze framed this breach in many terms like “becoming animal,” “becoming woman,” “becoming molecular,” or “becoming child.”⁶² Each of these are ways of “becoming minoritarian,”⁶³ that is, entering into a dual becoming—conceptually and physically—with those bodies and ideas rendered minor by the patriarchal, capitalist, logocentric, and anthropocentric discourses, practices, and institutions. This is what Deleuze meant when he describes thinking “before,” or as Stengers translates it “in front of,”⁶⁴ the damned, meaning the “oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor . . .” (WP 109). To think “‘before’ . . . is a question of becoming,” Deleuze warns (WP 109). “We become animal so that the animal can become something else” or one “becomes Indian, and never stops becoming so—perhaps ‘so that’ the Indian who is himself Indian becomes something else and tears himself away from his own agony” (WP 109). In becoming minor, we

⁶¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Concept of Nature* (1920; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7.

⁶² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 277.

⁶³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 291.

⁶⁴ Isabelle Stengers, “Beyond Conversation: The Risks of Peace,” in *Process and Difference: Between Cosmological and Poststructuralist Postmodernisms*, ed. Catherine Keller and Anne Daniell (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), 238.

enter into a “zone of exchange . . . in which something of one passes into the other” (WP 109). He continues, “This is the constitutive relationship between philosophy and nonphilosophy . . . The philosopher must become nonphilosopher so that nonphilosophy becomes the earth and people of philosophy” (WP 109).

This is, to my mind, of the most concise, revolutionary, and deeply moving statements in all of Deleuze and Guattari’s work. And it is exactly this invitation that Process and Jainism offer us—to enter into a nonphilosophical and proto-ontological becoming with the actual occasion or *jīva*, two creaturely descriptions of a fundamental process of existence excluded from our philosophical, ethical, and political discourses and actions. The process of self-determination and concept creation that exists in every pocket of the living multiplicity has been de-realized. Creaturely cosmologies invite us to become actual occasion or become *jīva*, a “becoming minoritarian that rends [one] from [a] major identity.”⁶⁵ Becoming with is a duration of “two simultaneous movements, one by which [a subject] is withdrawn from the majority, and another by which [a subject] rises up from the minority . . . an asymmetrical blow of becoming, a block of alliance,”⁶⁶ that undermines the dominant discourses of the subject and the division of who’s in and who’s out.

In the last section, I will argue that “becoming actual occasion” is precisely the risky alliance that Donna Haraway attempts in her controversial book *When Species Meet*.

⁶⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 291.

⁶⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 291.

2.2. *Becoming the actual occasion*

In the opening pages of *When Species Meet*, Haraway makes clear contact with Whitehead, a contact that will shape the entire book.⁶⁷ Readers find a single glossy page photo of “Jim’s Dog,” a moss-encrusted, leaf-covered, fern-sprouting burned-out redwood stump uncannily resembling an alert, seated Labrador. Haraway’s friend Jim had found this canine conglomeration in the Santa Cruz greenbelt near his home. “So many species, so many kinds, meeting in Jim’s dog,” Haraway reflects, continuing, “Whom and what do we touch when we touch this dog? How does this touch make us more worldly, in alliance with all the beings who work and play for an alternative globalization that can endure more than one season?” (WSM 5). With Jim’s dog, we are indeed in the company of a global multitude. The plastic and metal parts of the camera, the hands or machinery of its manufacturing, the eye that spied and the finger that captured the frame, the redwoods, the ferns, the damp cool air, and the entire forest multiplicity existing to create a recognizable form greeting passersby for those who have eyes to see and imagine. In the forest snapshot, we peer into a single instant that houses a seemingly endless fractal of multiplicities becoming. “I think this is what Alfred North Whitehead might have meant by a concrescence of prehension,” Haraway writes, “It is definitely at the heart of what I learn when I ask whom I touch when I touch a dog. I learn something about how to inherit in the flesh” (WSM 7). *When Species Meet* is an attempt to extend that inheritance to the nonphilosophical, the damned, the animal, so that that the animal can become something else.

⁶⁷ Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 5; hereafter WSM.

Haraway is a theorist of becoming and the pages of her book are devoted to illuminating the micro- and macro-processes of becomings taking place between the “three crucial boundary breakdowns” she diagnosed years earlier in her posthumanist “Cyborg Manifesto”: between human/animal, between this human-animal and machine, and between the physical and nonphysical.⁶⁸ Her appraisal of animals in contemporary society depicts current extremes of animal agriculture, vivisection, and pet-owning culture.

She does not denounce these “contact zones” of domestication as “as an ancient historical disaster . . .” though she is extremely critical of the meat industrial complex as well as the trend to keep pets as fashion accessories or “living engines for churning out unconditional love . . .” (WSM 206). Haraway wants to show a lesser-known aspect of domestication describing examples of animal agency and the productive contribution of creaturely “partnerships-in-the-making,” such as those she shares with her agility dogs Cayenne and Roland, but also those she shares with “significantly unfree partners” in labs or on her plate (WSM 72).

Many CAS scholars bristle at Haraway’s work, as do I, when she affirms vivisection or meat-eating, when she speaks on behalf of a chicken “willing” to die for our daily bread, or when she affirms the feral pig on the barbecue spit at a faculty dinner. Stephanie Jenkins has criticized Haraway’s advocacy of learning to “kill responsibly”

⁶⁸ Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs,” in *The Haraway Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 10-11, often referred to as “Cyborg Manifesto.”

instead of adopting feminist vegan ethics.⁶⁹ James Stanescu has argued that Haraway looks at species while overlooking individuals in a “god-trick of transcendence.”⁷⁰

Although I empathize with the sentiments of these theorists, I argue that these dismissals miss the broader impact that Haraway’s work can have on a theory of animal liberation that is aimed at total liberation, alternative globalizations, and ecological societies rooted in economic and social practices of freedom that proliferate liberties amid entanglements. This vision will require a much more thorough accounting of our impact on creaturely life, which does not stop at animals. It will also require a greater capacity for partnership, both across politicized lines of different justice-oriented movements that do not always see eye-to-eye, as well as partnerships with life forms and systems that have been rendered passive fodder or victims, or merely de-realized as productive contributors to the creative advance.

2.3. Recognizing our partners in reworlding

Haraway’s project is an attempt to illuminate the ways in which all creatures contribute to local and global “reworlding” (WSM 93). This is an important aspect of Haraway’s theory as one that is, like her methodology, *in process*. Reality changes when species meet, and humans cannot take “themselves to be the only actors . . .” (WSM 206). Life is “coshaping all the way down, in all sorts of temporalities and corporealities” (WSM 164). Following Barad’s theory of agential realism, Haraway points out that her notion of “species” is far from the fixity of the biological discipline she comes from.

⁶⁹ Stephanie Jenkins, “Returning the Ethical and Political to Animal Studies,” *Hypatia* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2010), 506.

⁷⁰ James Stanescu, “The Biopolitics of Michael Pollan and Donna Haraway,” *Critical Animal*, entry posted June 11, 2009, <http://criticalanimal.blogspot.com/2009/06/biopolitics-of-michael-pollan-and-donna.html> (accessed online July 12, 2012).

“Species, like the body, are internally oxymoronic, full of their own others, full of messmates, or companions,” she asserts (WSM 164). Here, she echoes Whitehead’s description of creative occasions that intra-act to form a nexus or society. Jim’s dog, like the society of the Great Pyramid, is a living assemblage of agencies, and its ordered togetherness is a physical and conceptual provocation that changes the landscape for all involved, including Jim and Haraway who were so compelled by it. “[E]very species is a multispecies crowd,” asserts Haraway, enlarging from the outset the awareness of the buzzing planetary partners we coshape with (WSM 165).

In her chapter titled “Chicken,” Haraway provides rapid-fire glances into feathered domestication in all its shapes from the egg-laying hens confined en masse in order to feed the pyramid-building Egyptian slaves, to the smuggled Chinese chicks that contributed to a major outbreak of bird flu in Nigeria’s fledgling agribusiness industry. What is the point of Haraway taking on this first-person Chicken Little perspective? I think it is two-fold: first, to show how chickens, in spite of their captivity and colonization, have actively contributed to reworlding. Haraway is trying to give credit where credit is due, which is as much a tribute to exploited animals as it is to Deleuze’s minoritarian populations or colonized subalterns. Whatever the terms of domination, the “oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor” have contributed to the ecological and cultural landscapes in tangible ways and ought not have that contribution totally subsumed in critiques of exploitation (WP 109). Men, the west, and humans are not the only actors either in systems of oppression or down the road when history is being rewritten with a liberal reading of docile bodies now ostensibly being set free.

Second, Haraway is showing that our avian friends cannot be reduced only to anxious harbingers warning us of the falling sky. Indeed, their purebred presence at county fairs and their genetically modified breasts on fast food menus point to ruptures and idiosyncrasies of relational life in desperate needs of redress. These birds also offer a new way forward. Per Haraway, “The contact zone of the chick embryo can renew the meaning of awe in a world in which laying hens know more about the alliances it will take to survive and flourish in multispecies, multicultural, multiordered associations than do all the secondary Bushes in Florida and Washington” (WSM 274). Haraway is experimenting with what Deleuze and Guattari call “becoming-animal,” in this case becoming-chicken and egg, not just as a “god-trick,” but in order that the animal can become something else. She is not merely reflecting on the ruptures between human/animal/technoscience, but she is deterritorializing herself as the privileged subject through a thought experiment capable of changing the future state of relations.

Haraway is, in a word, doing philosophy with the nonphilosophical—an immaterial speculation for the sake of material change. She is attempting to employ “regard” for the provocative agency of creaturely life, much as the Jains do in their bird hospitals, by “looking and looking back,” a regard that “aims to release and be released in oxymoronic, necessary, autonomy–in-relation . . . as trans-acting” (WSM 164). This is not the gaze of cultural studies, she asserts, but a transformative attention that changes what is possible next (WSM 164). “We don’t get very far with the categories generally used by animal rights discourses,” she writes, “in which animals end up permanent dependents (‘lesser humans’), utterly natural (‘nonhuman’), or exactly the same (‘humans in fur suits’)” (WSM 67). Haraway is asking what it would mean to regard creatures—by

which she means all creaturely life—as workers but not slaves, as kin but not children, as commodities but not property to be owned. To be clear, she is not diagnosing, nor am I advocating, a new and “better” state for creatures as workers, kin, or commodities. On the contrary, she is advocating shifts in our perspective toward agential realism rather than paternalism. These perspectival shifts are the becomings needed if bodies have any chance of breaking free of the conceptual cages and agony in which they are captive.

Her experiment is not the only way to become animal, nor do we need to agree with the way she attempts it. However, I think it is incumbent upon us as critical theorists to engage Haraway’s experiment, however much it vexes us, because she is attempting something very rare. Haraway endeavors toward the double move of becoming—to forego the subjectivity she is granted in humanist politics and personal preference to become something else and for that becoming to change the real future—*her* future as much as the creature’s—as it always does when species meet.

It is easier to see how Haraway becomes-animal when she talks about giving herself over to the countless hours of joint work and play with Cayenne. In their training, Haraway sees alternative modes of domestication, meetings that respect and “transform the bodies of the players in the doing itself” (WSM 175). Those of us who have interacted with creatures may resonate with this transformation. Even if we are critical of domestication, we may yet have been touched and shaped by those bodies who are its products in moments of “sybiogenesis,” or “potent transfections,” the private phenomenon of our “forbidden conversations,” or “oral intercourse,” which make up “a nasty developmental infection called love . . . a historical aberration and a naturalcultural

legacy” (WSM 15-16). But it is more difficult to see how Haraway becomes-animal when she affirms the same hybrid becoming in vivisection and animal agriculture.

These narratives, like many within the book, remind us of the responsibility we bear as “becoming with” other bodies in the ongoing (re)configuring of the world. Our partners exists in every pocket of life—from concrete bodies to the agential cuts of actual occasions and jīvas—in the flesh and at the most impersonal and strange stages of life. Ecological societies aimed at total liberation must take this increasing scope of life into consideration. Stanescu is right that we cannot sacrifice individual lives for relational wholes, as pointed out so well in Marti Kheel’s *Nature Ethics*, in which she gives a sound intellectual spanking to all the conservationist greats like Aldo Leopold, Warwick Fox, Teddy Roosevelt, and Holmes Rolston, who emphasize the mountains at the expense of the moles. Even Gandhi receives an unapologetic reprimand. Kheel’s ecofeminist holist perspective affirms Stanescu’s claim that theorization and action must hold systems and individuals together.

The crux is that for Haraway, “individuals” has now expanded to the entire universe of becomings. The relational “whole” is nothing but self-constructing “agential cuts” involved in world-shaping. Systems of relevant relations and individualism are not opposed phenomena but mutually requiring. She is not willing, for example, as is Francione, to write off the majority of existence as unworthy of consideration merely because it does not meet a narrow criteria of human subjectivity or sentience. On the other hand, the expanded notion of individuality does not move her to abstain from meat-eating or animal testing in her own life and work, a troublesome position for one so

compelled by creaturely agency as well as by a love for her companion dogs that unfortunately remains rather nepotistic.

Nevertheless, Haraway, like the Jains within the bird hospitals, is attempting to recognize a wider swath of creative becoming at play. Again, by suspending, though not necessarily overriding, our humanist assumptions and sense impressions, we experiment with different ways of becoming “before” the animal, practices of freedom through which the animal might become something else.

What Haraway asks of her readers is to attempt the consequences of our philosophies. We cannot just say that all life matters without recognizing that we do take life and benefit from its use, something she grapples with in her consideration of animal testing and meat-eating. Either we get around it, as Francione does, by relegating much of the universe to deterministic automatons that do not have interests, or we accept the empirical and speculative perspectives that continue to show us how all life intra-acts in the process of reworlding. If we accept the latter, then Haraway’s book makes much more sense, as does her exhortation to not make life “killable” (WSM, 80). We do not have to align ourselves with her particular approach in order to employ her methodology, which is to become, not just animal, but also the actual occasion. As described by Loomer, Haraway is trying to increase her perceptive stature. She is trying to grow her awareness in order to receive as much of the truly strange as she can abide, in order to transform herself as well as the attitudes and practices currently in play toward a future of greater regard. The book is not a statement of Haraway’s position for all time, but a momentary event that adds itself toward a transforming future that even Haraway herself cannot predict.

Haraway becomes-actual occasion in order to demonstrate the cost of not making something killable. Like the epistemic practice of *syādvāda*, she refrains from dismissing alternative points of view when they do not conform to her own personal desires, experiences of care, or meaning. She takes on an architecture of the actual occasion when she tries to grieve the death of her cat *as well as* considering the raccoon who killed it, *as well as* considering the sheep and rice that went into the scientifically formulated kibble her cats eat, “systems that should not exist,” (WSM 280). None of it, she asserts is “emotionally, operationally, intellectually, or ethically simple . . .” (WSM 281). Considering the complexities of multispecies relationships means trading in rights and wrongs for better options. “Becoming with” is the way of sitting amid the entanglements—as impersonal and strange as they may be—and trying to act again and again without the guarantee or guardrails of ethically normative frameworks, or self-certainty.

Becoming with means tolerating differences, not for the sake of relativism, but as is the case of *syādvāda*, to collide, persuade, and change. Around a table of colleagues and students, Haraway describes the transformative aspect of “indigestion,” as various individuals debate the ethics and aesthetics of eating a sautéed placenta, a peculiar ritual two of her students had just experienced after a midwife delivery. “I had found my nourishing community,” writes Haraway, “even as its members began to look a little green around the gills while they contemplated their comestibles” (WSM 294). She continues:

This community was composed of people who used their considerable intellectual skill and privilege to play, to tell serious jokes, to refuse to assimilate to each other even as they drew nourishment from one another, to riff on attachment sites, and to explore the obligations of emergent worlds where untidy species meet (WSM 294).

Haraway enlarges her community. And her methodology is sound even, and perhaps especially, if the aim of total liberation is to include the subaltern, the nonphilosophical, the proto-ontological, the damned and de-realized in the conversation—beyond, and even subversive of, the privilege of the university.

The most troubling chapter of Haraway's text is the final one, in which she details a faculty party where her colleague Gary Lease had hunted a feral pig and mounted the body on a spit. This decision was politically and personally offensive to some of the faculty members present, and Haraway explains that several of her colleagues refused to eat the flesh (WSM 297-99). But whereas some differences were tolerated over the meal of a cooked-up placenta, they could not be withstood at the pig roast. "We all avoided conflict" recounts Haraway, "and no real collective engagement on the ways of life and death at stake took place . . . 'good manners' foreclosed cosmopolitics . . ." (WSM 299).

Stanescu is unconvinced of Haraway's final analysis, stating that a "cosmopolitical moment does not occur when we set aside partisanship (as she so often seems to imply), but can only occur *through* partisanship," of which eating is a paramount example.⁷¹ Jenkins, too, sees Haraway as hostile toward veganism, accusing her of homogenizing all types of killing and presenting a "straw-person" version of animal rights. "This disavowal of ethics in animal studies is especially dangerous because it disengages the relationship between theory and practice."⁷² Jenkins helpfully crafts a "vegan ethics" that is not about purity, a position that has been gaining ground and

⁷¹ Stanescu, "Biopolitics," my emphasis.

⁷² Jenkins, "Returning the Ethical," 507.

causing strife in activist circles.⁷³ But when it comes to philosophies of animal liberation that aim at total liberation, alternative globalizations, and ecological societies, we will need to grapple with Haraway's claim that "killing well is an obligation akin to eating well. This applies as much to a vegan as to a human carnivore" (WSM 296). Trying to practice what it would mean to truly liberate life from its various modes of de-realization and exclusion from our philosophical discourses—and what that would look like in our own alternative habits should we step away from dominant capitalist frameworks of production—we will certainly find ourselves facing extremely difficult choices, none of which will be "innocent, bloodless, or unfit for serious critical investigation" according to Haraway (WSM 66).

Jenkins is absolutely correct that a vegan life places fewer demands on bodies, requires less energy, and water, and has a much lower overall impact on the planet. This assessment mirrors the logic of Jain karma theory that encourages eating low on the karmic scale. But Jains know full well that this impact still counts and cannot be de-realized. Haraway too, for her part, acknowledges (without any disclosure of her own meat-eating) that "most people do not have to eat meat" (WSM 298). But as Best points out, single-issue vegan living expressed in personal dietary choices is just *one* part of the revolutionary transformation needed to combat the systematic treatment of animals,

⁷³ Vegan Outreach, for example, the international non-profit organization for whom I worked from 2008-2010, held a similarly pragmatic view that framed veganism in terms of eliminating the most suffering. Their leaflet "Even If You Like Meat," reminded readers that they could reduce suffering even if they could not fully give up meat or dairy but minimizing consumption of those products, especially of chicken and fish, whose bodies make up the majority of factory farmed causalities and industry support. That they do not mandate an abolitionist approach or a specific philosophical commitment has resulted in some consternation among animal activists. Learn more at www.veganoutreach.org.

subaltern populations, and systems. Experiments in living, killing, and eating well are needed and will require us to let go of so many of the guardrails that we currently cling to, including many that we are not yet able to admit.

Although I live toward veganism and vegan advocacy myself, I am increasingly aware of my own complicity in violent systems merely as a facet of our collective way of life. Even as one who seeks to minimize my planetary impact, I live in a region of the United States that should, in all wisdom, be depopulated immediately. Every glass of water I drink and every toilet I flush drains vital rivers from the north, ecosystems and economies already beyond repair. In this suburban oasis, it is nearly impossible for me to live without some access to a car without giving up a number of activities that activate me in life-giving ways, reminding me of the cost of my desires that have been allowed to balloon without any checks or balances. And the fact that I do not eat cheese does not diminish the impact of my fuel use, water consumption, and energy draw in order to thrive here in this semi-arid valley. When I buy fruit at the market, I know damn well that those subaltern spectral bodies in the agricultural north, running back and forth along the orchard rows, are doing my dirty work so that I can get a pound of organic fruit for two bucks on sale. The energy it takes to have vegetarian dog food delivered to my house makes me cringe when I think of the congested roadways that continually obliterate and pollute life in this part of the country and around the globe. And because I come from a very rural area of the country where it is possible to live with a lower-footprint—at the cost of a very different lifestyle—I am actively grappling with what it would really mean for me to consider these biopolitical stakes personally, much more at the level of even a small community or urban center.

Stanescu's point is a strong one, that every act of eating is partisan. It is a choice for something, but even that choice is a select valuation, an ordering among multiple factors, some that are weighted heavier than others. It is one synthesis from the given data. Only by becoming nonpartisan, nonphilosophical, proto-ontological can we begin to include the enormous swath of dynamic life that does not rise to the level of personal or political framing, in hopes that it, too, may become something different, insisting its way into our partisan and philosophical calculations. This, of course, includes becoming animal, but is not limited to that. We become more impersonal so that the impersonal may become personal, a paradoxical expanse whose limits are yet unknown.

In becoming actual occasion each of us is challenged to increase the breadth of data we tolerate in our concrete action, welcoming strange and different claims and holding as much contrast as we can without losing our ability to act. I know I am not the only animal advocate who has met people who make their decisions differently than I and whom I yet respect immensely for the seriousness which they bring to their existence and the ongoing reflection and personal/communal change they attempt and inspire. And I am sure I am not the only one who has met animal advocates whose perspective is so narrow as to suck the air from a room. But among those whose bodies and vocations are engaged with the complexities of environmental, transnational, feminist, post-colonial, and economic systems and ruptures—not to mention those communities whose ancient life ways are so glaringly at odds with contemporary habits—I have learned much, even though there may be certain conditions by which they would consume the flesh or fluids of animals. I am well aware that my presence has impacted and even persuaded them, as theirs has mine, a testament to the multispecies collisions that moves us together toward

un/re/worlding in the form of risky disagreements in which I have held my breath that the bond could hold and grow from the dissent. Sometimes it could not, and sometimes the cost to my own commitments seemed too great and I could not manage nor assent to the breadth required.

By admitting this cross-contamination of thought, I am in no way obligated to give equal credence to every point of view I meet. For me, the point of view of the feral pig looms large and, unforeseen circumstances notwithstanding, I would not eat its flesh if it were before me today. It may well be that the feral pig require much less life to produce than the cultivation, production, packaging, and transport of my soy burgers or lentils (though this certainly does not hold for resource-intensive industrial meat). And even if it did, I would be hard pressed to deny an emotional connection with that pig that I do not have in quite the same way with an amorphous field of soybeans . . . yet.

This is one of the great beauties of the Jain way of life: first that caring for certain creatures—as exemplified in their unwavering commitment to vegetarianism—does not rule out the increasing perceptive care of other life, and second, there is no mandated truism that my life always takes precedence over the lives and desires of others. But this is no surprise. For millennia people have voluntarily sacrificed their own pleasure, interests, and bodies for those they love, their children, their friends, even for a principle. Walter Kaufmann even challenges the logic of “the golden rule” based on the rich history of countless people choosing for themselves something that they would not choose for others.⁷⁴ Such decisions are laden with complications, contradictions, and “irrationality” that yet speaks to what is most hopeful in our world—that the so-called “selfish gene” of

⁷⁴ Walter Kaufmann, *Without Guilt and Justice: From Decidophobia to Autonomy* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1973), 188.

ensuring our own survival turns out not to be a mechanistic switch after all, and there are innumerable example of creatures co-feeling with others and enduring discomfort in their place, alongside them, or so to lighten their burden.

Although living toward a vegan life in contemporary cultures is not very difficult (in fact, it can be downright indulgent, and plant-based societies have thrived the world over), there is a deep aspect of co-feeling for many who choose this experimental practice of freedom. As talk-show icon Ellen Degeneres said in a conversation with cooking host Rachel Ray, “. . . I would eat cardboard rather than go back to eating animals . . .”⁷⁵ In Jainism, the connections we make to the broader multiplicity can, at some point, exceed our own ego and aims, as evidenced by monks and nuns who tread lightly on the earth by minimizing their needs and desires in order to maximize their co-feeling with others. As I will discuss in the next chapter, Whitehead also envisioned the possibility of a relational existence “where the ‘self’ has been lost, and interest has been transferred to coordinations wider than personality” (AI 285). In all cases, the decisions we make are based on a narrow selection from amid a vast living multiplicity, and philosophizing otherwise does not solve the many socio-ecological crises we face as a burgeoning population shredding the seams of our responsive planetary systems and the creaturely kin that we share this planet with. Haraway did not want to silence dissent at that faculty party, but proliferate it. She did not want the strained quiet of agreeing to disagree. She wanted her colleagues—hunters and vegans and feminists alike—to seize the opportunity of productive conflict, to trust that the bond, however temporary and tenuous, would hold

⁷⁵ YouTube, “Ellen and Portia on Rachel Ray,” video posted May 7, 2012, YouTube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_wCA2AH3d (accessed November 24, 2012).

and move them all toward a reconfigured world.

A predominantly plant-based diet is the primary contender for feeding the planet's burgeoning population, a fact I take as given for several reasons. First, the eventual obliteration of government subsidies to farms (now mostly medium- and large-size corporations), will reveal the true cost of meat, dairy, and egg production and render it much less accessible for the average citizen's wallet.⁷⁶ Second, decades of plowing has killed much of our nation's soil, now on life support with synthetic fertilizers made from fossil fuels.⁷⁷ Much as in Cuba, for whom the oil embargo in the 1960's fundamentally undermined their dependence on cars, farm equipment, processing, refrigeration, and long-haul transport, diminished fossil fuels will necessitate similar revolutions in food production around the world.⁷⁸ Decreasing access to water, another key ingredient in resource-intensive farming, will also impact current models,⁷⁹ as will the air, water, and soil pollution that is currently plaguing so many communities.⁸⁰ Third, awareness about political and special interests in agriculture is growing, as is resistance to policies and practices that claim rights to land and biodiversity-rich systems that indigenous or local

⁷⁶ Michael Pollan, "You Are What You Grow," *The New York Times*, entry posted April 22, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/22/magazine/22wwlnlede.t.html?_r=2&ref=magazine&, (accessed September 12, 2012).

⁷⁷ Larry Gallagher, "The Joy of Dirt," *Ode Wire* (March 2010), entry posted March 1, 2010, <http://odewire.com/50849/the-joy-of-dirt.html> (accessed February 1, 2013).

⁷⁸ Miguel A. Alteiri and Fernando R. Funes-Monzote, "The Paradox of Cuban Agriculture," *Monthly Review* 63, no. 8 (January 2012), <http://monthlyreview.org/2012/01/01/the-paradox-of-cuban-agriculture> (accessed January 2, 2013).

⁷⁹ The World Bank, "Agricultural Water Management," <http://water.worldbank.org/topics/agricultural-water-management> (accessed December 24, 2012).

⁸⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Livestock a Major Threat to Environment," entry posted November 29, 2006, <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000448/index.html> (accessed June 6, 2008).

communities live within. The 1970s Chipko Women's Movement in India demonstrated that communities can and will fight against the seizure and killing of land, forests, and biodiversity that is essential to their physical and spiritual existence.⁸¹ Global communication and networking will continue to spread knowledge about these efforts and increase the number and power of those who resist the "inevitable" advance of progress. Fourth, although the factory farm model is making its way to plant-based societies around the globe in countries with fewer regulations,⁸² the realities of breeding, housing, and slaughtering resistant bodies in sufficient quantity and with enough speed to feed the growing global population is and will remain a grotesque proposition that has little to do with ending hunger or providing nutrition, and everything to do with profit and entitled appetites.⁸³ Concerned citizens will continue to expose and resist "humane" fallacies, as well as the economic deception, and environmental, social, and spiritual cost of this kind of systemized brutality.

The shift to a predominantly plant-based future will not happen overnight, nor is it clear that this shift can be total or possible in all places, as most activists admit. It is still less clear that there will be a consensus of thought driving this plant-based move. For my part, the means of thought and feeling that undergird the evolution toward alternative globalizations and ecological societies shape the character of the ends achieved. While it is crucial to identify and resist the exploitation of animal life and environmental systems,

⁸¹ See, for example, Haripriya Rangan, *Of Myth and Movements: Rewriting Chipko into Himalayan History* (New York: Verso, 2000).

⁸² Danielle Nierenberg, "Factory Farming in the Developing World," *World Watch Magazine* 16, no. 3 (May/June 2003), <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/534> (accessed February 1, 2013).

⁸³ Center for Food Safety, "Factory Farms," <http://truefoodnow.org/campaigns/factory-farming/> (accessed February 2, 2013).

reducing creatures to the status of passive victims in need of rescue and paternalist protections will not fuel the kind of political and ethical reimagining needed to truly displace anthropocentrism with panexperiential agency, creativity, and partnerships in reworlding.

Additionally, though it is clear from the Jains, and many plant-based communities, that meat eating was not a necessary part of even ancient life ways, it does not follow that all those who eat flesh in the world see individual lives as valueless units, nor that the western construct of “vegan” can be applied like a band-aid on any patch of geo-cultural skin. I would not give that pass to most people, but I am a toddler when it comes to those rare indigenous communities who truly live with the land and its creatures with an intimate exposure to systems and seasons—a kind of entwined cellular perception with creaturely life—that I cannot claim, even as I attempt another season of nurturing a backyard plot of vegetables while learning more about urban and mountainous foraging. Nevertheless, indigenous life ways do not get a pass either as some romanticized Eden. We are in the quagmire together now and we must co-shape each other, proliferating the voices at the table and not reducing them, finding ways beyond fear, anger, guilt, and claims of justice. We take the past toward a future, but we can never return to that past.

Disagreements are not necessarily a recipe for nonpartisan relativism, but a sign of ontological and political regard that gives way to persuasion and conceptual collisions that will transform the practices of freedom needed to live toward revolutionary change on behalf of animals and all subalterns—“full partners in worlding”—currently made killable.

Chapter Six

Provocative Life: (Re)configuring Futures without Loss

Alexis Zorba: Why do the young die? Why does anybody die?

Basil: I don't know.

Alexis Zorba: What's the use of all your damn books if they can't answer that?

Basil: They tell me about the agony of men who can't answer questions like yours.

Alexis Zorba: I spit on this agony!

—From the film *Zorba the Greek*, based on the novel by Nikos Kazantzakis

“The history of ideas is a history of mistakes,” writes Whitehead, “But through all mistakes it is also a history of the gradual purification of conduct.”¹ There is, it seems, no way to undo the messy entanglements of the past, nor the cost it exacted on creaturely life of all kinds. There is only the present toward possible futures of less error. The creaturely cosmologies of Process and Jainism both offer a provocative vision beyond loss, towards a future when that which has been excluded can be revalued and remembered in the present in the transformative becomings of greater stature, prehension, and co-feeling. The religious impulses toward a peaceable kingdom can be reclaimed, though not in any easy final salvation by which tragedy is buttoned up neat and tidy. In a processive world, the past can never be undone, but both Process and Jainism offer the metaphysical potential—though not a promise—that what has been de-realized or excluded, *can* be realized again.

¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (1933; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1967), 25; hereafter AI.

1. The Cost of Becoming is Perishing

Processive change pervades the universe. It is both the Heraclitian promise that we can never step in the same river twice, but it is also the tragic fact that the past is swept away behind the progress of the present. That which has happened is fact and it will never return. That which has been is now gone. That which has died can never be brought back to life. Jainism and Process thought both take the cost of becoming seriously. In many ways, the perishing of creaturely life, and its role in the creative advance, is their primary concern. As Whitehead asserts, “The most general formulation of the religious problem is the question whether the process of the temporal world passes into the formation of other actualities, bound together in an order in which novelty does not mean loss.”²

Already, Whitehead is refocusing the religious aim toward the question of salvation. For those readers who, like me, have been estranged from these categories of thought, the term “salvation” may be a difficult entry point for conceiving the end goal of philosophies of animal liberation. Yet, consider the vision of the masked activist in her peaceable kingdom on the Animal Liberation Front’s website described in the second chapter of this project. The longings of this counter-cultural, secular organization press toward a cosmic revisioning of co-existence—a salvific hope that all that has been lost and cast aside in the crush of our advancing civilization is not in vain, but can yet inspire new forms of partnership and co-feeling. Whitehead’s interest in a religious turn is decidedly not about perpetuating existing creeds, validating sacred texts, or exhorting the

² Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Gifford Lectures, 1927-28, corr. ed., ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 340; hereafter PR.

necessity of belief. Rather, he investigates the ideal aims of traditions, philosophers, and streams of thought—their visions of redemption and salvation—to judge the capacity of those aims to fully acknowledge (and perhaps mitigate) the real cost of life.

Individual actions or epochs of destruction are indeed worthy of religious judgment, but Whitehead sought to examine the cost of life from a more general perspective. “The ultimate evil in the temporal world is deeper than any specific evil,” he asserts, “It lies in the fact that the past fades, that time is a ‘perpetual perishing.’ Objectification involves elimination” (PR 340). He is referring to the actual cost of becoming. As an alternative to ontologies of being based on static substance, fixed identities, or difference, becoming poses its own challenges in regards to theorizing the inevitability of loss. An actual occasion, for example, objectifies or evaluates certain facts of the past into or out of its own self-determination. The past is formative, but the becoming of something new requires the passage of something previous. This is the outcome of Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s “eternal return.” The return, not of the same, but of novelty and difference, *marks the loss of the same*. The “will to power” negates pure repetition, but also leaves the past in its dust.³ As Faber writes, “If *only* novelty returns, this is only *possible* if the same vanishes. Something is lost, eternally lost then, in the eternal return.”⁴

This inevitable loss is precisely what motivates Judith Butler’s political theory of mourning. As a social theorist, Butler’s notion of performativity recognizes the “loss and

³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 65.

⁴ Roland Faber, “‘A Tender Care that Nothing Be Lost’—Universal Salvation and Eternal Loss in Butler and Whitehead?,” in *Butler on Whitehead: On the Occasion*, ed. Roland Faber, Michael Halewood, and Deena M. Lin (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 239–40.

vulnerability” that “seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure.”⁵ For Butler, the self is always one of post-presence—as described in the second chapter of this project. A self is never transparent to itself because it is always constituted by past and present networks of relations and influences over which it has no control, and out of which it performs itself. Everyone is from the start and without consent, “already given over, beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own.”⁶ In *Precarious Life* she reminds us, “It is not as if an ‘I’ exists independently over here and then simply loses a ‘you’ over there, especially if the attachment to ‘you’ is part of what composes who ‘I’ am.”⁷ She continues:

If I lose you, under these conditions, then I not only mourn the loss, but I become inscrutable to myself. Who ‘am’ I without you? When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. On one level, I think I have lost ‘you’ only to discover that ‘I’ have gone missing as well.⁸

Mourning these lost attachments becomes a central theme in her work. In *Frames of War* and *Precarious Life*, she extends a theory of mourning to the political stage as the means by which we might revive a co-feeling with those currently de-realized by violence, such as the Palestinians or Arabs whose deaths in civil and military conflicts do not seem to register on the global stage at all.⁹ “Who counts as a human,” she asks, “Whose lives count as lives? And finally, What makes for a grievable life?”¹⁰ In this

⁵ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2006), 20.

⁶ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 28.

⁷ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 22.

⁸ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 22.

⁹ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2010), xix-xxx.

¹⁰ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 20.

question, she demarcates her primary interest in the victims who are swept under the inevitable loss of becoming.

Becoming, it seems, by virtue of its drive toward novelty, must exclude—sometimes violently so—a great deal of the multiplicity. What is taken in and left out of each occasion remains a part of the inheritance of becoming, but never in the flesh as it were. As Whitehead assents, “The present fact has not the past fact with it in any full immediacy. The process of time veils the past below distinctive feeling” (PR 340). As in Jainism, becomings bear the karmic traces of all that has been valued in and all that has been excluded, but the inheritance is perceived only dimly, if at all. “In the temporal world, it is the empirical fact that process entails loss,” writes Whitehead, “the past is present under an abstraction” (PR 340). The vivid immediacy of what has gone before is eternally lost in order for the present to emerge, and this loss, for Butler, must be marked by mourning as an ethical and political recognition that real-izes lives affected by violence, even the violence of becoming.

1.2. Perishing as disease and cure

But if it is an empirical fact that the passage of time in the temporal world of becoming entails loss, then might there be a transcendent or virtual alternative in which the past is recovered? “. . . [T]here is no reason, of any ultimate metaphysical generality, why [loss] should be the whole story,” claims Whitehead (PR 340). “The nature of evil is that the characters of things are mutually obstructive. Thus the depths of life require a process of selection” (PR 340). Whitehead is referring to the very simple fact that the past and present do not coexist in the same moment of unison. One must come after the other. Even if the two are felt in unison, the present novelty is obstructive of the past, by virtue

of its very novelty that negates any pure repetition. Likewise, both Process and Jainism recognize that the needs and desires of one individual are obstructive of the needs and desires of another. Life requires life. Freshness requires the perishing of what has gone before. It is this obstruction that St. Isaac grieves when he describes “a heart on fire for the whole of creation.” It is the seeming necessity of obstruction in the creative advance that fuels the sorrow that St. Isaac, Butler, Whitehead, and Jain philosophy lament.

And who among us does not feel the weight of this seemingly unavoidable mutual obstruction? Are we not confronted continuously by the antagonisms of progress? Either the grove of trees or the new housing development; either the safe passage of raccoons, deer, and possums or the four-lane highway; either the detention and torture of suspected terrorists or our national safety; either ongoing breeding, abuse, and slaughter of creatures for food or our collective hunger? For that matter, it is me versus the lentil soup, me getting an affordable price on this silver-slick laptop versus workers’ protections in China, my perspective over that of a friend. The mutual obstructive character of things can appear as inevitable, an expression of the survival of the fittest, the naturalistic fallacy and evolutionary threat of “my way or the highway.”

Yet, it is precisely when we feel the nausea of inevitability lurching within us, like a spoon threatening to scrape clean the inside of a jack-o-lantern, that we are feeling the traces of obstructed life insist their way back into the present. As St. Isaac shows, the ache one feels over mutual obstruction is the start of its own remedy. The feeling that “grips such a person’s heart,” inspires humility, and resistance, and a growing compassion.

The fact that life requires a selection from among the multiplicity is for Whitehead, only the beginning of the story of becoming. “. . . [S]election is elimination as the *first step* towards *another* temporal order seeking to minimize obstructive modes. Selection is at once the measure of evil, and the process of its evasion” (PR 340, my emphasis). The question is then how to transform obstruction into usefulness, or how to convert opposition into contrast. “Why should there not be novelty without loss of this direct unison of immediacy among things?,” he asks (PR 340).

In the final chapter of *Adventures of Ideas*, titled “Peace,” Whitehead describes the becoming of Peace as a gift that one cannot control. It is, he writes, “the removal of inhibitions and not its introduction” (AI 285). But what does this mean? Is he merely postulating a “universal salvation” that covers over the individual costs, that precisely avoids the question and seriousness of eternal loss? Does this gift of peace remove any possibility of doing something here and now that will minimize obstruction?

On the contrary, Whitehead is describing what Stengers calls the tremendous “risks of peace,”¹¹ which is in itself a process of “self-control at its widest,—at the width where the ‘self’ has been lost, and interest has been transferred to coordinations wider than personality” (AI 285). Self-control is precisely the paradox of becoming exemplified by the actual occasion and the *jīva*. As a becoming takes in more of the world into its own stature or perception, it diffracts the boundaries of the “self,” dispersing identity or difference into a zone of indistinction, a two-fold unification of pure immanence. In the same move, depersonalization is the start of a repersonalization of a much greater scope.

¹¹ Isabelle Stengers, “Beyond Conversation: The Risks of Peace,” in *Process and Difference: Between Cosmological and Poststructuralist Postmodernisms*, ed. Catherine Keller and Anne Daniell (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), see title.

It is a gift precisely because it is a risk that requires the relinquishing of the guardrails of control that define a stable identity or that overlook the real costs of identity for the sake of difference. Peace is the risk of indistinction and indeterminacy, a flirtation in becoming that transforms opposition to contrast, ineffectiveness to usefulness, all in the same lightning flash of becoming.

2. A Post-Secular Provocation

What visions can speak to this transformation of opposition into coexistent contrasts? Throughout this project, I have explored the dual directions of becoming that do just this. The actual occasion and *jīva* are two metaphorically robust propositions that not only reframe the multiplicity of creative life, but do so by transforming binary antagonisms into mutual requirements. The occasion and *jīva* are the processive unification of the given past and potential future in a breath of self-expression. The many exist in the one and that one is not destructive of the multitude. But in each case, the one is limited by temporality, empirical limits, and concrete selections enabling novelty at the expense of the excluded past. Are these limitations, in fact, a final and unavoidable necessity of the creative advance?

Both Process and Jainism refute any claim to this necessity. Their response lies in the concepts that each uses to explain a “unison of immediacy.” In Process, Whitehead repurposes the notion of “God” as the ultimate actual occasion. As already mentioned, Jainism describes the liberated and omniscient *siddha* as the ultimate example of full perception. Both of these concepts, taken at face value, appear suspicious, laden with the weight of transcendence and Being that an ontology of becoming repudiates. But they avoid the critiques of stasis and subjugation implied in traditional notions of transcendent

Being through their double movements of becoming. Neither concept acts as a trump card over the changing multiplicity nor as a linear end-of-the-line Ultimate determining the fate of the creative advance. Rather, they function as bridges that fold back into the totality of concrete happenings.

2.1. Whitehead's God-as-event

In spite of his religious skepticism, Whitehead reclaimed and refashioned the notion of “God” within the logical framework of his speculative system. As Faber is quick to point out, “he does so *not* because of his Christian heritage.”¹² He continues, “Rather than being an uncontentionably Christian idea, it is much more aligned with Buddhism, Chinese and Indian thought, and . . . certain strains of Jewish heritage.”¹³ The role that Whitehead casts for “God” is not the result of a religious bias or necessity, but is introduced as “a metaphysical decision” that serves two primary purposes. The first is to answer, according to Faber, “the *philosophical* question of permanence and flux,”¹⁴ and the second is to explain how perpetual perishing—and all that is lost in the dim past of the creative advance—can be salvaged into something provocative and immediate for the concrete world.

2.1a. Unifying permanence and flux. In the first case, Whitehead puts his own twist on the question of permanence and flux. The twist comes in that both of these binary aspects are mutually required within “God,” an event that Whitehead sees as an ultimate actual occasion with two key differences from the concrete actual occasions we have discussed so far. First, God-as-event is virtual rather than actual—a virtual

¹² Faber, “A Tender Care,” 243.

¹³ Faber, “A Tender Care,” 243.

¹⁴ Faber, “A Tender Care,” 243.

receptacle capacious enough to hold a multiplicity of conceptual potentials. Being deficient in actuality, God-as-event is not limited by space or time and canprehend the fullness of given data within its becoming. Second, whereas temporal and concrete actual occasions start with the physical pole of prehension or feeling and join that with a conceptual potential toward a particular future, God-as-event functions in reverse. Whitehead describes this as the *consequent nature* of “God” that prehends the effects of the world in the immediacy of a momentary becoming.

Thus, God-as-event is permanent in so far as it is not actual. As a virtual occasion, God-as-event can maintain a degree of permanence, or presence, that does not pass away with time. But this does not mean that God-as-event is fixed or unchanging. On the contrary, permanence “is the realization of the actual world in the unity of [God’s] nature . . .” in a moment that is everlasting, or rather, not limited by the passage of time (PR 345). The content of this consequent nature is not separate from flux, but is the fullest prehension of it, in a present unity. Similarly, the width of this prehension only becomes actual through integration into concrete becomings. Permanence then refers to the fact that all potential are kept in the present, with the fullness of their freshness and provocative power available for integration into concrete actual occasions. Potentials held in this present unison of immediacy never fade into a massive and diffuse “background” (AI 260), nor are they swallowed into the “dim massive complexity of our feelings of derivation” (AI 213). They remain fully available in an abstract unity of presence.

2.1b. Salvaging the lost past. The second function of Whitehead’s God-as-event is to explain how perpetual perishing — and all that is lost in the process of becoming — can be salvaged into something provocative and immediate for the concrete world. This

also requires two moves. First, as mentioned above, the consequent nature of God-as-event—being a virtual receptacle—prehends the fullness of the actual world in the breadth of its becoming. Prehension is not limited only to those things that happened as facts. Rather, the consequent nature of God-as-event prehends the totality of even those data that were valued out of decisions. Both actual happenings and what was excluded from their becoming—as Whitehead puts it, “What might have been and was not”—are felt in a unison of presence (AI 286).

God-as-event is a medium of everlasting and growing unison, a dynamic virtual storehouse evidencing a “tender care that nothing be lost” (PR 346). As a metaphor or conceptual image—and it is *nothing but* a virtual image—Whitehead’s God-as-event “saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of his own life . . . which loses nothing that can be saved. It is also a judgment of a wisdom which uses what in the temporal world is mere wreckage” (PR 346). God-as-event functions in Whitehead’s scheme as the ultimate salvage yard or closed recycling loop. Everything that happens and everything that is evaluated out or discarded in an act of becoming is downloaded in the total matrix of God’s comprehensive event. This event is the fullness of a stature in which nothing is excluded, an architecture of total prehension, a unique becoming that suppresses its particular identity in exchange for co-feeling the general totality, relinquishing central personal dominance for a democratic multitude—an ecological event without loss.

2.1c. *Provocative folds into the present.* This unison of immediacy does not exist only for its own abstract sake. As already mentioned, God-as-event is pure vacuity without prehension of and actualization in the concrete world of becomings. The eternal loss that is swept behind the necessity of novelty is thus not only relegated to the distant

past. It has an impact on actual becomings. As part of the World of Value, or the realm of abstract potentials, God-as-event holds the lost past in the immediate present as an “activation of *importance* for new becoming.”¹⁵ According to Faber, “As realized values, [these virtuals] *are lost*” and the full perception and depth of that loss is felt in the unison of immediacy.¹⁶ He continues, “Yet *as lost*, they ‘everlastingly’ *affect* the flux of becoming by their *impact on* [new occasion’s] *virtuality*.”¹⁷ To put it another way, as every concrete occasion becomes toward an abstract potential, this eternal unison of immediate and virtual potential is the lure toward a future possibility that is paradoxically the totality of the lost past. This is the second pole of God-as-event called the “primordial nature,” or the provocation toward an alternative future. An occasion becomes between the immediate past of what was and virtual potentials of what *was not but yet still could be*, folding into itself values of what was negated, past, or de-realized, now activated afresh in a new moment of novelty.

The intra-play of these folds is one of the great insights, logical outcomes, and inspiring visions of Whitehead’s system. He reworks the notion of “God” as well as static and transcendent concepts like permanence, eternity, and immortality to be a deep receptacle of relational feeling that can not only “come to terms with the ambivalence of facticity as eternally lost,” but also refold these salvaged potentials in their “‘present’ import of, and impact on, a ‘concern’ for a future *in the other* of new becomings.”¹⁸ Per Whitehead:

¹⁵ Faber, “A Tender Care,” 244, author’s emphasis.

¹⁶ Faber, “A Tender Care,” 244, author’s emphasis.

¹⁷ Faber, “A Tender Care,” 244, author’s emphasis.

¹⁸ Faber, “A Tender Care,” 244, author’s emphasis.

When they perish, occasions pass from the immediacy of being into the not-being of immediacy. But that does not mean that they are nothing . . . The not-being of occasions is their ‘objective immortality.’ A pure physical prehension is how an occasion in its immediacy of being absorbs another occasion which has passed into the objective immortality of its not-being. It is how the past lives in the present. It is a basic element from which springs the self-creation of each temporal occasion. Thus perishing is the initiation of becoming. How the past perishes is how the future becomes (AI 245).

As we contemplate the shape of direct intra-action amid entanglements in fresh philosophical approaches toward creaturely liberation, the architecture of becoming places what has been lost as a central provocation for what might yet be. The mistakes of the past live in the present as a lure toward a different mode of becoming. This is not an opportunity to go back in time in a quantum leap or instant replay to fix a passive error. It is the chance to let those mistakes or absences provoke us toward futures of risky creativity, coalitions, and planetary feeling right now in the present. The vision we move toward is, in part, the potential inspired by the lost past, a creaturely—though immaterial—provocation that can actualize reworlding.

2.2. The omniscient, liberated siddha

For the Jains, the *niścaya naya*, or transcendent perspective, is the capacity of every *jīva* to actualize full and unimpeded perception of the universe-in-process. Like Whitehead’s God-as-event, this potential is immanent to every karmic becoming as its own ideal and potential, but unlike the Process “God,” there are as many transcendent perspectives in the Jain universe as there are *jīvas*. Nevertheless, this is not a recipe for atomism or multiple isolated truths since karma keeps every *jīva* connected to the multiplicity even after liberation.

2.2a. Karmically-bound omniscience. Omniscience is the first step to liberation but the two are not necessarily synonymous. As mentioned in the previous chapter,

omniscience is the full perception of the creaturely multiplicity. It can be cultivated in the actual world through physical, mental, and spiritual disciplines, by creatures of all kinds. A jīva can reach omniscience even without being liberated, as liberation is dependent on a final neutralization of karmic exchange that can take additional time. However, every liberated jīva is by definition omniscient with the addition of having all karmic bonds and bondage eliminated. Thus, omniscience is both an immanent capacity, a reachable aim, and a transcendent ideal, all enfolded and refolding into the jīva's process of becoming.

In the temporal world, the jīva's omniscient capacity is present, but is always limited by its own individual perspective, always excluding some aspect of dynamic truth. Through embodied practices of increased perception, non-conscious co-feeling, compassionate ahimsa, as well as the doctrines of multiplicity and plural knowledge, each jīva is able to mitigate limitations and move closer toward greater unison of fact as a reachable and fluid goal even amid ongoing karmic entanglements. An omniscient jīva may still be obscured by karmic particles (*pudgala*) but no longer be limited in its perception by these bonds.

2.2b. Karmically-liberated omniscience. As a transcendent ideal, omniscience is the primary characteristic of the siddha, or liberated jīva. The only difference between the siddha's omniscience and that of the karmically-bound jīva is that all of the obscuring karmic particles are utterly gone. This is the moment when it seems as if the jīva has left the changing world of flux behind in the trump card of permanence or transcendence. However, this is not the case. The siddha is no longer limited by karmic bonds yet omniscience is still the full prehension of the karmically-bound universe, an intimate and fluctuating knowledge of everything that happens and does not happen in a moment.

One way to think of this liberated perception that yet remains bound to, but not limited to, the world of entanglements is described in *Sāṃkhya Kārika*, one of the earliest extant texts of the Sāṃkhya school of Indian philosophy attributed to Īśvarakṛṣṇa in the fourth or fifth-century CE. The author describes the “Spirit” as “endowed with the characteristics of witnessing, isolation, indifference, perception and inactivity.”¹⁹ The next verse explains how the empirical world grows more perceptive by coming into contact with the “reflection of the intelligent (Spirit).”²⁰ The image of perceptive, inactive, witnessing is a good description of the siddha’s omniscience that perceives all the karmic entanglements without being caught in or limited by them. Just as Whitehead’s World of Value, or “God,” only takes on actuality through its realization in concrete fact, so too does the inactive Spirit or siddha seem “as if it were an agent” because of its tangible effects in the manifest world of attributes.²¹

Another way of envisioning the omniscient siddha is in the relation between jīva and body. In the temporal realm or, as Kundakunda calls it, the “empirical” world, Jainism posits the jīva as expanding to fill its current form, shifting with the bodily and karmic changes it undergoes. Between each transmission from one body to the next, the jīva contracts to a minute size before expanding again into the next body. In this way, the jīva is immanently entangled with all the karmic happenings its body undergoes. As already described, the jīva and its body form an intractable mutual requirement within the karmic system.

¹⁹ *Sāṃkhya Kārika* XIX, trans. Har Dutt Sharma, comm. Guṇapādācārya (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1933), 30.

²⁰ *Sāṃkhya Kārika* XX, Guṇapādācārya’s commentary, 31.

²¹ *Sāṃkhya Kārika* XX, 31-2.

But according to the Jain sutras, at the moment of liberation, something peculiar happens that sounds very much like the consequent nature of Whitehead's "God." In fact, arihants or kevalin—those who have obtained omniscience—are very much like gods in Jainism, in spite of it being a non-theist tradition. After all, it is precisely a *certain* notion of a transcendent, non-relational, or supernatural God-as-One that Jains reject. At the moment of enlightenment, the liberated jīva, expands to the size and shape of the universe, the space-points of which comprise its new body.²² Then it shrinks down to the shape it inhabited just prior to death and shoots straight into the siddha loka, or realm of liberated souls, at the apex of the universe, where it remains omniscient of all processes and events in every given moment, even as it functions as a relational ideal for those happenings.²³

Two things are worth noting here. First, every liberated siddha shares the universe as its body. However, Jains always retain the karmic individuality of every jīva. They are not subsumed into a final One. Each of the twenty-four Tīrthankaras, for example, is singular in terms of their karmic history, omniscience, and provocative ideal. They are never collapsed into one another even as they ostensibly share the same body of the universe. Their omniscience remains their own, each a unique God-as-event as it were, a consequent nature perceiving the fullness of the karmically-processing world.

Second, as already noted, the form of the siddha is depicted as vacuous, an empty cut-out of the last embodiment prior to mokṣa, which is always human, but now composed of the innumerable space-points of the entire universe that can expand and

²² Padmanabh Jaini, *Collected Papers on Jaina Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010), 53.

²³ Jaini, *Collected Papers*, 53-4.

contract in amorphous ways—a Deleuzian “body without organs” that is in no way limited to one empirical identity. The *Acārāṅga Sūtra* states that the liberated jīva:

is not long nor small nor round nor triangular nor quadrangular nor circular; [it] is not black nor blue nor red nor green nor white; neither of good nor bad scent; not bitter nor pungent nor astringent nor sweet; neither round nor soft; neither heavy nor light; neither cold nor hot; neither harsh nor smooth; [it] is without body, without resurrection, without contact (of matter), [it] is not feminine nor masculine nor neuter, [the jīva] perceives, knows, but there is no analogy (whereby to know the nature of the liberated soul); its essence is without form; there is no condition of the unconditioned. There is no sound, no colour, no smell, no taste, no touch—nothing of that kind.²⁴

In each siddha, the individuations of personal attachments, human sensorium, and epistemological limits give way to more diffuse and diffracted co-feeling that is somehow perceiving of all things, yet limited by and destructive of none. While the empirical jīva attempts to actualize its relational perception amid the entanglements of its karmic limits, like lava pushing up through the density of earth, the liberated jīva empties itself of any fixed identity and becomes a negative space, a hollowed out medium of all happenings in the universe, like the Platonic khora or receptacle. This siddha denotes the possibility of perceiving a multiplicity of shifting karmic identities and potentials in a unison of immediacy that can provoke deeper actualizations of perception in the empirical world. The ideal aim folds back into the karmic world as multiple inspiring lures.

2.2c. Ahimsa between the folds. The Jain way of life is the attempt to actualize this potential, and every karmic attempt becomes part of the changing ideal. Similar to how the actual occasion enfolds the World of Value, or “God,” into a unison of immediacy, the jīva enfolds the perceptive capacity of its own omniscience into its

²⁴ *Acārāṅga Sūtra* 1.5.6.4, trans. Hermann Georg Jacobi, in *Jaina Sutras: Part I and II* (1884; repr., [n. p.]: Forgotten Books, 2008), 65.

karmic intra-actions. The jīva's compassion widens in direct proportion to the relinquishing of the limited ego and individual senses as it realizes fuller depths and varieties of perception. The immanent conjunction of these two worlds is described as ahimsa. Ahimsa is not a perfect principle to be applied in the same way in every situation. It is the gradual coordination between the fullness of omniscience and the limitations of empirical life. Ahimsa is the mediating action between a world of karmic cost and a transcendent perception of realized compassion in which nothing is lost. The jīva is simultaneously a limited becoming and an unlimited perception of every karmic entanglement that is and has been. Its mode of becoming *impersonal* becomes a methodology by which the world becomes *more personal*. The karmic mistakes of the past become part of an ideal aim that lures the present forward, folded into the actuality of karmic becomings.

3. Futures of the Forgotten Past

Neither Whitehead's revised notion of God-as-event, nor the liberated, omniscient siddha can "be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse" (PR 343). On the contrary, they are its "chief exemplification" (PR 343). The transcendent principles do not emerge in antagonism with the living multiplicity but as a wider and fuller confirmation of that very multitude. Neither concept covers over the costs of becoming nor justifies what has been de-realized or excluded by absorbing it into some feeling-less Totality. The complete prehension of these Ultimates may indeed seem strange to us from the perspective of our present limits. After all, it is from the borders of these limits that we make our political and ethical calculations of who is in and who is out and what we owe them.

The transcendent ideals in Process and Jainism do not heed these boundaries in any final way. In fact, the very character of “God” and the siddha depict an abundant unison of immediacy in which there is no exclusion, only contrasting co-feeling without loss. This architecture of total prehension—even of what has been excluded—may seem like an impossible and deeply impersonal aim—especially since it indicates a suppression of personality, of identity, or the self. How shall we make the necessary political transformation without a personal subject?

But this is the surprising twist: that the Ultimate(s) becomes less personal in order to make the strangeness of the creaturely universe fully personal and immanently felt. In this double move, Process and Jain metaphysics take on the wild multiplicity of flesh and fur, fins and feathers, showing how every becoming is always a becoming many, a becoming other, a becoming damned, a becoming nonphilosophical, a becoming proto-ontological; in short, a becoming creaturely, so that all creatures of creativity can become something beyond our current inscriptions upon them, folding and un/re/folding into new novelties capable of supporting total liberation, alternative globalizations, and ecological societies. The transcendent modes of becoming are the methodologies by which we can grow in feeling and stature.

Suddenly we see the religious turn depart sharply from its expected path. Rather than take us away from the creaturely multitude, creaturely cosmologies fold us intractably back into the middle-ness of bonds forgotten, neglected, or lost to us, provoking us to forget our limits so that we might remember our breadth and carry it with us into a new day.

The path of becoming is full of mistakes and oversights, intentional exclusions and accidental violence, karmic collisions and permeations from every direction. Loss is the condition of our creative and creaturely life, but it is also a provocation toward an alternative world. To imagine a world without us, the speculation with which we began this project, is a bit like imagining a world without dinosaurs, a world without the countless species we have lost to extinction, a world without those myriad souls lost to neglect, calamity, tragedy and reactive brutality, a world without our absent ancestors or our lost beloveds, a world without memory. In the moment we seek to remember, we are already being provoked by that past living in the immediacy of the present, sparking our intra-actions and reworldings toward the future even as they are formative of our past.

“In each personality,” writes Whitehead, “the large infinitude of possibility is recessive and ineffective,” forgotten, un-sensed, derealized, lost, excluded, beyond the realm of feeling or philosophy.²⁵ He continues, “We are confronted with a vague spread of human life, animal life, vegetable life, living cells, and material existences with personal identity devoid of life in the ordinary usage of that word” (IMM 67). This vague spread of recessive and ineffective life eludes our normative frames of recognition, our ordinary and personal perceptions, and recedes into the margins of our barely-felt present and into the faint hue of our dimly perceived past. The damned flash into existence and are gone. But as Whitehead assures us, “that does not mean they are nothing” (AI 237). Far from it. They exist in the immediate present of every becoming as potentials insisting on new actualizations in the ordinary moments of our life, direct intra-actions capable of including what was previously left out.

²⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, “Immortality,” in *Essays in Science and Philosophy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 67.

The specters of the past become the sirens songs of the future, conceptual bridges enabling the boldest visions, the most anarchic revolutions, and a subversive resistance to the normative present. Creaturely becoming, it turns out, is both the cost and cure. We fall into the folds to forget ourselves and remember what might have been and was not, as what can yet be.

Epilogue

I live my life in widening circles
 Moving over the things of the world
 I may not reach the final circle
 But that is what I shall attempt to do
 I circle 'round God, 'round the ancient tower
 And I've been circling and circling for thousands of years
 I still don't know: am I a falcon,
 A storm or an endless song?

—Rainer Maria Rilke

I shirts delivered. Ten weeks before my mom died, she wrote this sentence in the first line of Friday, April 14, 1989. I was ten years old when those shirts were delivered somewhere in our house. My brothers were fourteen and nearly three. My sister was five.

Our mother recorded nearly every day of her adult life in an annual Belgian-made Keith Clark journal, with the month, day, day-of-the-week, and year printed along the top of each page. In the seven months between her diagnosis and her death, a malignant brain tumor transformed her typical accounts of haircuts and grocery trips, dinner menus, money concerns, relationship ups and downs, and humorous quips about teaching preschoolers, into disjointed attempts at narrating her existence. *I shirts delivered.*

Her experimental drug treatment, which began the day after Christmas, more or less ended her journaling habit. After that, I found only an occasional few words of her distinct penmanship shakily noting a one-liner of her doings. *Groggy day—Just couldn't get my head together at all* on March 19. *Card from Dave* on April 4. *I'm at mom and dad's* in the margins of May 2.

But although my mom could no longer fill in the happenings of her daily life and thoughts, the pages were not empty. By my count, over forty people filled in the day's

activities between her diagnosis in December of 1988 and her death in late June 1989.

The guest authors consisted of my mother's parents, me, my older brother, my stepfather, my mom's close friend who traveled with her for her treatment, my aunt, or one of the many volunteers and neighbors from the little town we lived in who came to help my mom and all of us preserve some semblance of a routine.

In the pages I see my mother only through other people's accounts, suggestions, and hopes. Most of these were simple prescriptions like *Karen should have half a grapefruit every day*, according to my grandmother on May 8. *Karen cleaned kitchen, did laundry, swept floor*, wrote a woman named Diane on March 24. Connie noted on April 10, *Karen seems very alert and her motor skills are good today*. My mom's longtime friend and teaching partner wrote poignant and humorous accounts of their trip to the clinic in Houston: *The flight was uneventful except for when you hollered out that you sure wished you could have some peanuts (the stewardess said "no") . . . your sense of humor is crazy . . . so what's new?* Or the next day, staying at a hotel near the treatment center:

We drove for groceries—and we bought cheese, fruit, veggies, pop, and two knives. Oh yes, and a pound cake . . . When we got in the car you pulled a package of cigarettes out of your pocket. When I asked you where you got them you said, "Stole them, I guess." We both laughed for quite awhile—then you asked me why we were laughing . . .

It is peculiar to read the account of my mother's physical and mental demise, as experienced through the writing of those who were there, who saw my mom disappearing into uncharacteristic gestures before their eyes, even as they searched for sparks of familiarity in the body they once knew.

I, too, felt her disappearance several months before her death and isolated myself from that loss. *Brianne did not want to see her mom*, wrote my grandmother on July 3, the day of the funeral. Instead, I remember running down the church steps into the quiet normalcy of the small town streets on a quiet Monday, like any other Monday. Later that day, the journal reminds me that I picked cherries with my cousins and uncles, which gave way to a cherry fight. *Exciting*, my grandma wrote. I went swimming. Two days later, my softball team won our game. The journal stopped on Tuesday, July 11, 1989. On that day I wrote, *Brianne up at 9:30. Nessa made blueberry muffins. Went swimming at 10:00*. The journal tells me that my brother woke up at 11:00.

In John Irving's novel *The World According to Garp*, the main character, the author T. S. Garp, speculates that it is hard to write about death when you know something about it. "I know more about death now," he explains to a small audience at a mid-life reading of his first novel, "and I'm not writing a word."¹

I, too, know something about death but, unlike Garp, I realize that writing about death and loss is essential to reconceiving our relations, not only to animals, but to all the forgotten and de-realized losses that take place among the living in general. The pages of my mother's journal are evidence of her life and death, the loss of one woman that was profoundly personal to me and shaped every event that came after it—familial fractures etched upon my recollection like the faint white scar inside my ring finger from running it along the sharp lip of a soda can. My experience of her death colors my evolving self-understanding, my reactions to others, and my sensitivity to fear, confusion, separation, and pain in the lives of other creatures and people. In that way, this project begins like all

¹ John Irving, *The World According to Garp*, 20th Anniversary Ed. (1976; repr., New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 560.

activism— within the limited perspective of one person's bewilderment, sorrow, fury, and hope.

But the journal also reminds me of much more that I had left out of my recollection, many forgotten and impersonal details that were lost in the backward-facing solipsism of lingering grief, and which now creep back in, generating fissures and redirections in my memory. I can find the years before she was sick, when our family was intact. I can trace the hand-drawn stars on the days she made love to her husband. I can read her insecurities, her creativity, and her wicked sense of humor. I can find her jottings about a picnic with me, or when my little brother put a marble in his nose, or when we went to my younger sister's dance recital or my elder brother's swim meet. I can find lines where she is fed up with our antics and just wants a day to herself. I marked the page where she is afraid of being sick, and of leaving us, but also keenly aware of the love and action her illness inspired in her community and family. *There's a magic of sorts here right now that I can feel so distinctly all around me . . . the magic of real love and concern and prayer. It's a tingly kind of electric sensation working in my mind*, on December 16, ten days before she left for an experimental drug trial that would do little good, but exemplified a hope and love she had for her life and for us, truths that had gotten buried underneath the snowfall of compounded losses.

Kurt Vonnegut, when asked if he believed in the possibility of communication with the dead, is rumored to have replied, "Of course! It's called reading." This reply touches on the very real potentials of the past to provoke change in the actualization of the present, even from the nonliving pages of a book, a journal, or a memory. My own narrative, I know, is being slowly repopulated by the handwritten scribbles of strangers,

filling the lines and margins of a history that I forgot or never knew, that open me to rival interpretations of a fixed past and toward alternative futures that loss alone has kept closed.

The jump between my own history and the extensive co-feeling I have long felt toward creatures, and especially toward the suffering, isolation, and diminishment of so-called “animals,” is not a linear track, nor is it even personal or tangible in any way I could explain. It is motivated perhaps by what Deleuze calls the “conceptual personae,” an image of thought, or the “friend,” that is not in any way reducible to a single character or person, but which is the very condition for thought. “Does not the friend,” he asks, “reintroduce into thought a vital relationship with the Other that was supposed to have been excluded from pure thought?”² I would like to think that this project has been an exploration of such strange friendship that percolates within all life, making and sheltering the conceptual spaces in which new realities can sprout, a ready midwife of the past in the present for what has not yet been imagined.

I have called upon the creaturely cosmologies of Process and Jainism because both attempt to articulate that strange “friend” of immanent creativity through which the included and excluded past access the present from two directions, pressing in from history and pulling toward alternate futures. Each offer methodological insights into experimental ways of living, moving, breathing, speaking, arguing, eating, and thinking that are capable of meeting and/or remembering what has long been left out of our formulations and philosophies, our language and our thought. I have tried to think with and through these lesser-known metaphysical systems so that they might become

² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 4.

something else in our philosophical future, just as they represent a thinking with and through the creaturely multiplicity for the sake of its transformation and the overhaul of our collective life ways. These chapters have enacted a de/re/territorialization of Critical Animal Studies, humanism and anthropocentrism, and personal identity in an attempt to highlight the landscape, subvert the terms, and diffract the limits of current discourses.

It is my hope that any “irregular contours” felt by the readers can serve as productive provocations for their own thought, just as the community of poets, artists, activists, and scholars noted in these pages have stirred me through helpful antagonisms, dissonance, and style.³ In a processive universe, the work of theory and action is never finished. To that end, it is my sincere wish that animal advocates especially, will find something useful in this work that can fuel the difficult tasks of education, resistance, direct-action, coalition-building, and self-care, for the sake of creatures and in pursuit of total liberation, alternative globalizations, and ecological societies.

With that said, there are a number of unresolved tensions in this work for which further attention is warranted. First, a more detailed analysis of Deleuze’s metaphysical outlook, especially regarding immanence, conceptual personae, and “thought’s relation with the earth,” would be fruitful and may expose some liberties I have taken with his and Guattari’s philosophical intentions. Second, a number of tensions and limitations are exposed in advocating a “religious turn,” as I have done. I hope the hints I provided toward full perception and co-feeling exemplified in Jainism’s omniscient siddha or Whitehead’s immortal God-as-event were substantial enough to leave an impression of the anarchic “religion” I intend, if not a full theoretical framework. “Religion” itself is a

³ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 83.

construction with manifold layers of Orientalism, colonialism, and homogenization. I have tried to argue for experiments in feeling and thought that capture certain “religious” visions at the same moment they are emptied of any discursive fixity. Third, I have addressed aesthetics, ethics, and value only tangentially. Since the aim of direct intra-action amid entanglements is not dependent on these terms or frameworks, featuring them centrally was counter-productive. My analysis of the approaches to Critical Animal Studies in Chapter Two as well as my treatment of Dombrowski and Henning in Chapter Three deals most directly with these concepts, though readers must decide for themselves the merits or gaps of my arguments. Finally, the tension between a pragmatic hierarchy of evolutionary order and a fully flattened ontology that affirms a panexperiential universe is not resolved here. I clearly gravitate toward the latter, and yet some aspect of the former is an undeniable condition of my existence. Through the dual-directionality of the becoming *jīva* and actual occasion, I have admitted the role of order and evaluation as spontaneous co-mappings and unifications that are not in any way prefigured, nor are they deterministic or ultimately limiting of virtual potential. I emphasize the experience of and potential for co-feeling in a unison of immediacy as a new context for order that escapes the structuralism and hierarchy that is so detrimental and dismissive of creaturely life.

In the end, I return where I began, to the question of a world without us. My return, of course, is not pure repetition, but expresses the twist offered up to the universe by every creaturely existent. I have felt acutely a world without my mother, without the continuity of family, and later a world without my brother, and my father. I feared from an early age the day when the world would be without me—the immobilizing realization

that my experiencing “I” would be frozen in the sleep of death while the world went by as usual. And I have grieved the tremendous loss of singular vitality, creativity, and freedom that comes in society’s mass captivity and killing of animals for food, entertainment, medicine, clothing, and companionship. Imagining a world without these bodies, a world whose appetites and greed increasingly breeds loss, death, and the destruction of kinship bonds between creatures—whether two-, four-, six-, or eight-legged, with flesh, fur, wings, scales, or fins—has left me often like Rilke’s panther— orbiting around a center of my own paralyzed will. Grief is, after all, an essential aspect of mourning. Yet, it can also undermine the creative abundance of the present by keeping us oriented toward a frozen past marked only by inevitable perishing, scarcity, and tragic, infuriating loss.

The creaturely cosmologies of Jainism and Process remind us that the world is never absent from the tragedy or vitality of its past. The spark and flash of existence hovers in the pages and ether of the present, ready to provoke us toward what might yet be. The bodies whose lives are wasted by systems of violence and entitlement are no longer here, but as Jain karma assures us, and as Whitehead claims, “that does not mean they are nothing.”⁴ In our becomings, the unknown, forgotten, or neglected past—of both shadow and light—paradoxically lures us from the future, toward widening circles beyond limited perspectives and selective memory. In the past, these perishings look only as loss, a world forever without them. But from the future, they beckon us toward territories unknown and excesses of feeling and impossible unison that undo us even as we are constituted in the currents of a storm, the dive of a falcon, or the rhythmic pulse of

⁴Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (1933; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1967), 237.

a buzzing planetary song. “It may be that believing in this world, in this life, becomes our most difficult task,” write Deleuze and Guattari, “or the task of a mode of existence still to be discovered on our plane of immanence today.”⁵ The world insists from within our disbelief and we within it, two-directions into and out of a creaturely multiplicity that is both utterly strange and somehow fully felt—circling back and through as a giant shuttle weaving reality, a karmic vision of play and possibility, a pattern dance of folds and friend.

⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 75.

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